John Updike: Renoir's Megashow

How The Democrats Lost The Deficit Issue • John Lahr On Charlie Chaplin

THE NEW REPUBLIC

Standoff in South Africa

By Breyten Breytenbach

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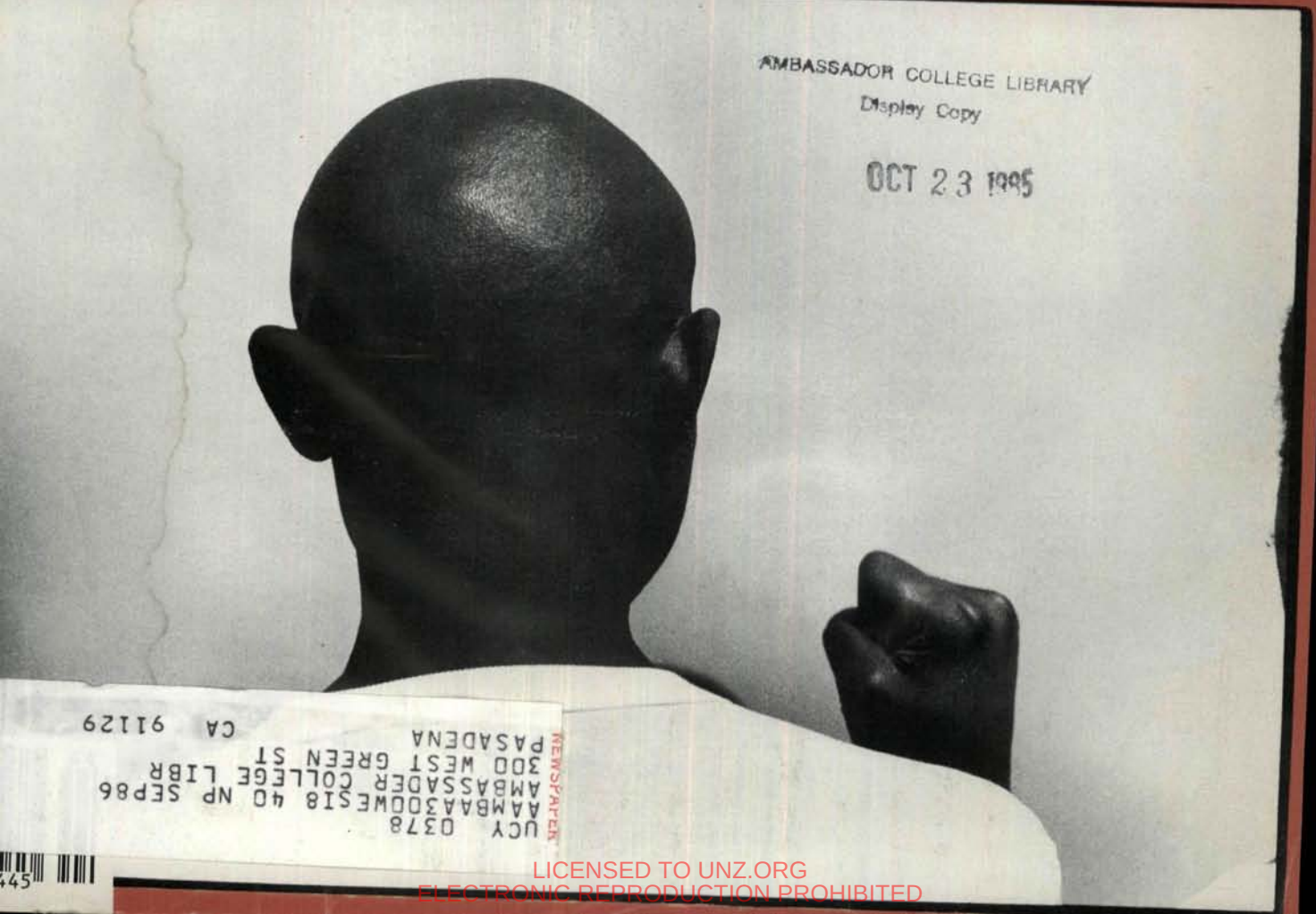

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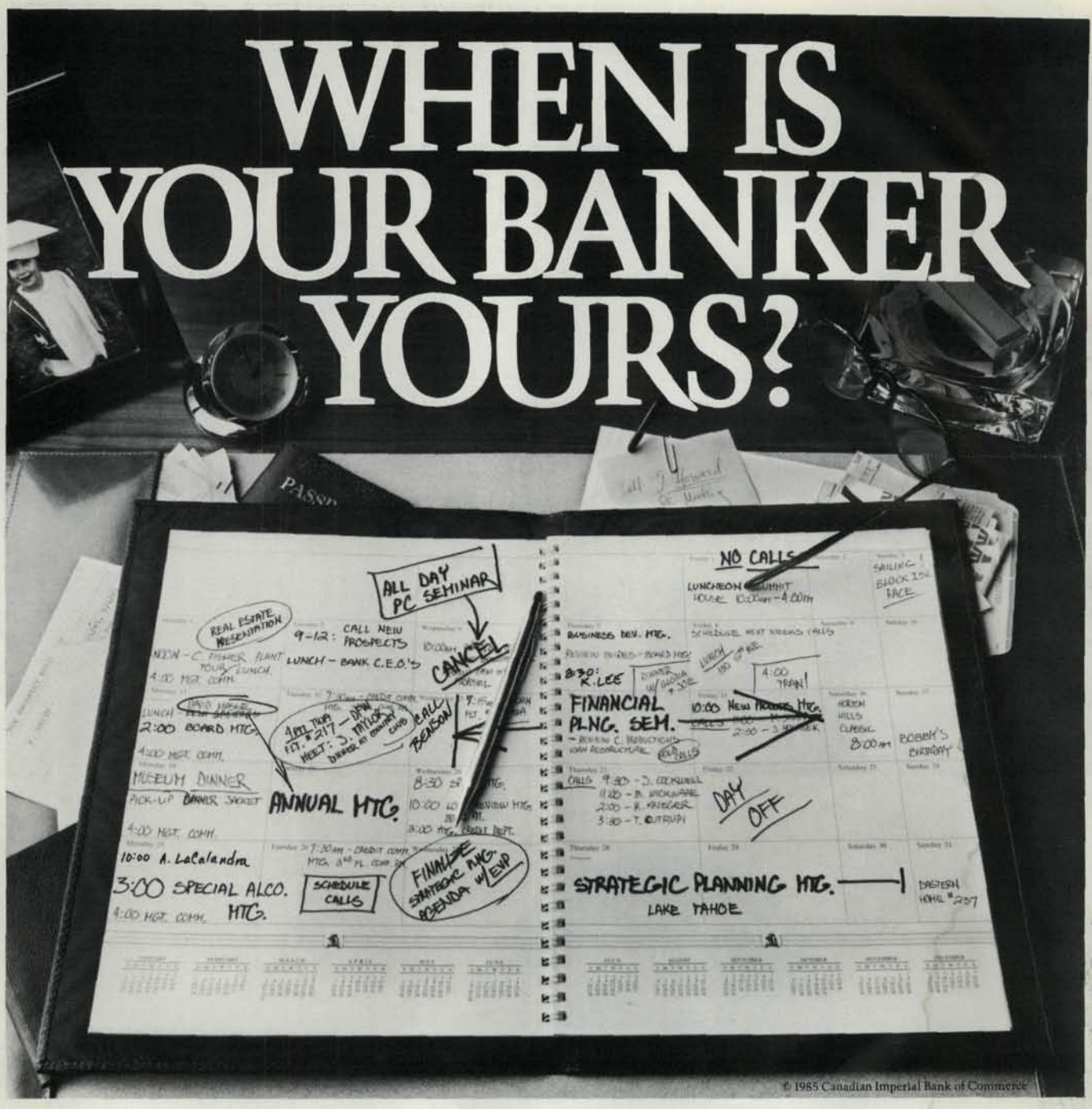

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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FROM WASHINGTON

DEFICIT-O-MATIC

The Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Deficit-O-Matic Shur-Fire Government Diet Plan has swept Washington with its promise of a balanced budget by 1991. President Reagan and both houses of Congress have now agreed in principle to slice $36 billion a year off the deficit, by across-the-board cuts if all else fails, until all the unsightly fat is gone in just five years. As a diet, this is akin to locking the refrigerator and hiding the key where only you can find it, since these same gluttons are free to repeal the plan anytime they want. Still, where self-discipline is weak, self-deception can be a useful substitute. The trouble with this diet, though, is that, while ostentatiously locking the fridge, the fatsoes have craftily exempted the cookie jar.

Anyway, locking the refrigerator and claiming you don't need to eat is not a very realistic way to lose weight. All the propaganda issued by the offices of Senators Gramm, Rudman, and Hollings—the White House, too, for that matter—contains not a single specific reference to any government program, benefit, or other activity that will be forgone as a result of their bill. You'd think it was all a matter of giving up that extra dollop of whipped cream. For that reason, a little math is in order.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that the federal deficit in fiscal 1990, under current spending plans, will be about $120 billion. Such projections are always iffy, but if anything this one is too optimistic. It uses the spending limits for 1986 and beyond that Congress agreed to in July and then immediately surpassed. It also assumes no recession in the next five years, which would mean an unprecedented eight straight years of growth. But it's morning in America, so let's be optimistic.

Under the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings timetable, the deficit is supposed to be down to $36 billion in 1990. To meet that goal, we've got to cut $84 billion. Out of total projected 1990 spending of $1.2 trillion, that's only seven percent. Easy, right? No, because about $250 billion of that is Social Security, which is exempt; another $200 billion or so is other entitlements, where the G-R-H diet only requires cuts in cost-of-living increases; $180 billion is interest on the debt, which is untouchable; and another $100 billion or so is previously committed military procurement contracts, which are also exempt.

Figuring one thing and another (interest savings thanks to earlier deficit reductions, other special exemptions), we could meet our diet in 1990 (with one year's cuts still to go, mind you) by chopping ten to 15 percent from everything else in the government. That's defense, welfare, national parks, cancer research, congressional staff, American flags, everything. What would Messrs. Gramm, Rudman, and Hollings cut? What would President Reagan cut? They won't say.

The mock-fair across-the-board approach of the budget plan itself is political, fiscal, and moral nonsense. Is Phil Gramm seriously going to stand by and allow a 15 percent cut in maintenance of our nuclear arsenal? In Secret Service protection for the president? In the Centers for Disease Control? Fat chance. Returning to the diet metaphor, you don't try to lose weight by cutting out equal proportions of ice cream, beer, broccoli, and diet soda. And where is the fairness in cutting equally from price supports for farmers (who have an average net worth of $790,000) and school lunches for poor children? Even by its own pinched notion of fairness, the G-R-H diet is unfair to the poor, since it limits cuts in indexed entitlements—generally middle-class pensions—to loss of COLAs, while allowing unlimited cuts in unindexed entitlements such as food stamps and Medicaid.

But the biggest unfairness of the G-R-H diet is the exemption for Social Security. That is the cookie jar. What the above mathematics actually shows is that the budget can't really be balanced without either raising taxes or

continued on page 49

"I MUST GET OUT OF THESE WET CLOTHES AND INTO A DRY MARTINI."

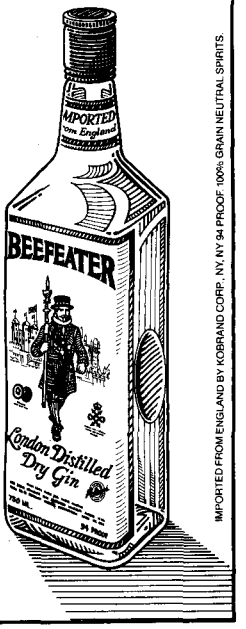
So exclaimed Alexander Woollcott one rainy day to his cronies at the famous old Algonquin Round Table.

Woollcott was not alone among the literary lions in his regard for America's favorite cocktail.

Somerset Maugham and Alec Waugh were both avowed martini men.

But none, including Woollcott, was really inclined to save his martini for a rainy day.

After all, New York has been known to go weeks without rain.



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That's why the National Captioning Institute calls America's broadcasting networks "our knights in shining armor." When NCI was founded in 1980 with a federal grant to provide television captioning services for the hearing-impaired on a non-profit basis, American broadcasters joined the cause.

AMERICAN TELEVISION —WE PUT IT IN WRITING

Five years later, we have reason to celebrate these efforts: more than 90 hours of closed-captioned programs are now available to hearing-impaired viewers every week. An estimated 400,000 viewers across the country now have access to a dimension of everyday life once totally denied to them—and the number is steadily growing.

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Viewers write to NCI to praise the service, from grade-school students to senior citizens. Some describe additional uses for closed-captioning—encouraging literacy and reading comprehension and teaching English as a second language. We'd like to recognize the efforts of the people at ABC who have made a personal commitment to the closed-captioning service. We salute NBC, CBS and PBS, as well, and the many corporations, independent producers, local stations and advertisers who have joined the federal government in funding this excellent cause. If you would like to know more about closed-captioning, write the National Captioning Institute, "American Television and You," 5203 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA 22041. Or call NCI at (703)998-2400 (Voice)/(TTY).

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CORRESPONDENCE

HEALTHY JUNK BONDS

To the editors:

Nicholas von Hoffman alleges that innovation in the capital markets reflects deliberate attempts by bankers to "bilk and swindle" unknowing and uneducable customers ("Barbecue Time," October 14). The markets are more complex today, but von Hoffman's concern that come the next recession these "newfangled" securities will be in default is misplaced. "Oldfangled" common shares of inadequately capitalized firms pose more of a threat to ill-informed investors than more complex securities backed by firms with stabler financial profiles.

If investors buy securities with greater than average risk, the financial markets compensate them with greater than average returns. Hence, "junk bonds" give higher yields than bonds issued by more conservatively financed corporations. It is the responsibility of a prudent investor to understand the opportunities and risks associated with a security and with the issuer of that security. The SEC's full-disclosure requirements help the investor to make informed decisions.

DEBRA FINE
New York, New York

WRIGHT WRONGS

To the editors:

Paul West skillfully uses a number of phrases in his piece on Majority Leader Jim Wright ("The Wright Stuff," October 14) to mislead the reader: "the small-time west Texas pol" (of course, he was only 29 years old); "the last of the old-time Democrats" (I doubt it); "a certified lefty" (in Texas—you must be kidding!); "Wright retreated. . . . [as] the dying man fingered 'communists' " (even Joe McCarthy would duck this one); "former Texas congressman Frank Ikard [said he] 'cannot recall him being out alone or way out front of anything' " (politicians are seldom out front; only writers can afford it); "then, as now, Wright . . . [is] cheap money" (with Reagan's deficit); "sided with those who would let [Vietnam] continue" (leave Rambo out of this); "he'd had his sights on the White House since childhood"; "through aviator glasses" (Wright was in the Air Force; the aviator glasses were GI issue); "cut him into a private gas well deal in east Texas" (all gas deals are private; the feds don't drill); "as a final gasp of the old go-along-to-get-along crowd"; "gives heartburn to younger Democrats"; "working his colleagues like a ward heeler". . . .

"THE NEW REPUBLIC" (back to rewrite)!

BILL NEWBOLD
Arlington, Virginia

FLYING NATO OPTIMISM

To the editors:

Walter Laqueur challenges my "wilder flights of optimism" regarding the American alliance network in his article "NATO's Identity Crisis" (September 30). I confess to being optimistic. If one examines the facts carefully, however, it is hard not to be. Although I do not claim that "we never had it so good" (as Mr. Laqueur implies), readers of my *International Security* article will find ample evidence that the U.S. and our allies still possess a significant advantage over our main rivals.

Mr. Laqueur and I agree on many points. But he suggests that I have exaggerated America's advantage over the Soviet bloc by including "stalwart allies" such as Mexico, Brazil, Greece, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan on the American side. Yet he failed to mention that I also gave the Soviet Union full credit for such world powers as Ethiopia, South Yemen, Laos, and Angola. Moreover, if some of our allies are less than stalwart, what should we conclude about Soviet "allies" like Rumania, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland? Indeed, I went to some effort to favor the USSR in my article by including countries such as Finland and Afghanistan, whose loyalty to the USSR is questionable, at best, as Soviet assets. Even so, the United States comes out far ahead.

If this still seems unfair, let us make a simpler comparison. What is the balance between the Warsaw Pact on one side and NATO plus Japan on the oth-

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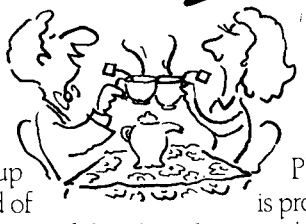
Tea and Trumpets



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THE NEW REPUBLIC
NOVEMBER 4, 1985

INTERCEPTION, FUMBLE

"Thank God we've won one," Senator Daniel P. Moynihan exclaimed, heralding a wave of national pride following the October 10 capture of the four known hijackers of the cruise ship *Achille Lauro*. Frustrated by unanswered terrorist attacks, Americans rightly rejoiced at news that Navy F-14 Tomcats had intercepted an Egyptian jetliner carrying the pirates and forced it to land at a NATO base in Sicily. The four terrorists are now in the hands of the Italian authorities, awaiting trial.

The Italians and the PLO hierarchy would love to close the case here. They would like us to believe that the four hijackers from the pro-Arafat faction of the Palestine Liberation Front acted without the complicity of the PLO, and that Mohammed Abbas, the leader of that faction, entered into negotiations with them as a favor to those countries whose citizens were aboard the ship. Thus Italy defends its decision to detain the pirates while allowing Abbas to escape to Yugoslavia, out of the reach of U.S. extradition. (Italy's pathetic rationale: Abbas was carrying an Iraqi diplomatic passport.) Arafat, for his part, hoped for an even broader public relations coup. The early signs were promising. Following the release of the hostages, Italian premier Bettino Craxi announced graciously, "We want to thank the president of the PLO, Yasir Arafat, who expressed his condemnation of the hijack and helped to seek a solution." Meanwhile, in the heat of the crisis, Egypt nurtured, and President Reagan briefly endorsed, the idea of handing the hijackers over to the PLO for trial.

Together, these developments promoted common yet dangerous misconceptions about the PLO: that its pro-Arafat "mainstream" bore no responsibility for the hijacking; that it opposes the use of terror; that it represents a legitimate diplomatic conduit through which nations may deal with terrorists; that its agent, Abbas, acted to end the ordeal out of altruism; and that the PLO is a quasi-sovereign state legally and morally competent to bring criminals to justice.

For months, the American press has championed the image of Arafat as a peace-loving moderate beset on all sides by violent radicals. As news of the hijacking filtered in from abroad, the media generally fell for Arafat's attempts to dissociate the pirates from himself and the PLO. Last week on this page we guessed that the press would award Arafat the Nabih Berri Statesmanship Prize for negotiating the resolution of a crisis created by his own forces. We were wrong. Two days after Abbas's PLF faction had claimed responsibility for the hijacking, several pundits were conferring this honor upon Abbas himself.

Any doubts that Abbas and Arafat were involved in the hijackers' mission should be promptly laid to rest. On October 10, a spokesman for the Palestine Liberation Front acknowledged that the hijackers—"our comrades"—had boarded the ship, along with their weapons, as part of a PLF terrorist mission in Ashdod, Israel. A source close to the PLF reported that Abbas—"their commanding officer"—had ordered them to return to Port Said.

Abbas's steadfast loyalty to Arafat is no secret. Indeed, it is generally acknowledged that the Abbas PLF faction is simply an arm of Arafat's El Fatah organization. It is inconceivable that Abbas concocted the Ashdod plot without the knowledge and support of his mentor, whose humiliation at Tunis the PLF explicitly sought to avenge. The pirates demanded the release of 50 Palestinian terrorists in Israeli prisons, primarily members of Force 17, Arafat's personal militia. Some of the *Achille Lauro* passengers have testified that taped messages from Arafat were played as accompaniment to the beating of Americans.

The inescapable conclusion is that Abbas and Arafat are incriminated in yet another lethal ordeal of terror. Their subordinates shot to death a 69-year-old invalid and threw him overboard in his wheelchair. They toyed with grenades and gasoline bombs, alternatively threatening to blow up the ship and to incinerate its occupants. Among the passengers they explicitly sought out Americans and Jews for the worst of their cruelty, including death. Abbas and Arafat did not pull the pins or squeeze the triggers, but they orchestrated the operation that put the hijackers and their weapons on board. And if the victims had been the Is-

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raeli citizens of Ashdod, both men would be claiming credit today. These are the PLO "moderates" you read about.

Justice requires not simply the incarceration of Arafat's pawns but, more to the point, the indictment, repudiation, and punishment of the terrorist elite whose designs led to the seizure of the *Achille Lauro*. A rare opportunity for such action presented itself when Abbas, whose involvement in at least half a dozen terrorist missions is well documented, unexpectedly turned up aboard the intercepted Egyptian airliner.

Craxi deliberately spurned the opportunity. He had pledged personally to President Reagan that the Italian government would detain Abbas until the United States could present evidence against him. In compliance with the U.S.-Italian extradition treaty, the Justice Department then provided Italian authorities with a warrant for Abbas's arrest and promised that a formal request for extradition would be forthcoming. In releasing Abbas, Craxi both violated the treaty and broke his promise.

There are two complementary explanations for this morally reckless decision. The first is that Craxi heeded Arafat's friendly warning that if Abbas were extradited to the United States, "uncontrollable reactions could result, as happened in the affair of the *Achille Lauro*. . . ." To this extent, Italy has sadly become the foremost client of Arafat's international protection racket, paying political tribute to PLO "moderates" in exchange for immunity from "extremists." The second explanation is that Craxi desperately sought to rid his hands of a man whose double role as statesman and terrorist confounded Italy's false distinction between the political and military wings of the PLO. As a conspirator and murderer, Abbas had to be tried; but as secretary-general of the PLF and member of the PLO's executive committee—put there by Arafat himself less than a year ago—he could not be detained without offending the Arab nations whose cooperation is crucial to Italy's nostalgic ambitions in the Mediterranean.

Either way, the Abbas fiasco bodes ill for the consolidation of Western resolve against terrorism. Indisputably, the capture of the *Achille Lauro* culprits is a victory. But how often will terrorists fall so neatly into our hands? The face-saving gestures of other countries, such as the withdrawal of plans to invite Arafat to speak at the United Nations' 40th anniversary commemoration, are hardly an effective response to terrorism. Substantial and lasting progress toward security will be achieved only when leaders such as Craxi are willing to confront terrorism not merely as a collage of lunatic outbursts but as the centerpiece of a coordinated political program. For 15 years the PLO leadership has been preaching peace while financing and directing the savage exploits of expendable stooges such as the hijackers of the *Achille Lauro*.

ONE CONSEQUENCE of this bloody episode and the hypocritical diplomacy surrounding it should be the demystification of the PLO and of its not very mystifying chairman. We certainly should not lament the unraveling of the Jordanian-Palestinian entente that was supposed to relaunch the peace process. The Western powers were so eager for talks that they did not want to see the fundamental fraudulence of the exercise. Yasir Arafat does not want peace; he wants Israel. It is a tragedy that he has held those Palestinians and other Arabs who do want peace hostage to his fantasies.

Although the Italians seem mired in their shame, some other Europeans seem chastened by this last experience in Palestinian duplicity. The British foreign minister declined to see a mixed Palestinian-Jordanian delegation including previously anointed PLO "moderates." And now the Common Market ministers have refused the calling card of the same delegation. Even the anxious diplomats of Europe seem to understand for the moment that these are not people of peace.

This latest act of terror was hardly necessary to illuminate the essential thuggish character of the PLO, despite its urbane professors. The facts have been accumulating daily for years. The tragic history of the Palestinians is now inextricably intertwined with their murderous heroes—hardly an inducement to even the most dovish of Israelis. Arafat and his fellow fantasists are especially blameworthy for making terror a reflex among so many of their young. Those politicians and journalists who have made themselves instruments, some willingly, some just credulously, of the PLO's systematic deceptions are responsible too.

NUCLEAR MEDICINE

Dr. Yevgeny Chazov, cochairman of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, the multinational doctors' peace group just awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, writes, "I am a cardiologist and every day I listen to the heartbeat of my people." Well, not quite. Chazov is head of the Soviet Union's Fourth Administration of the Ministry of Health, which runs specially equipped hospitals reserved for the Communist Party elite. Cardiologist to the stars, he has served the hearts of Leonid Brezhnev, Yuri Andropov, and Konstantin Chernenko. On the basis of this clinical sample, Chazov assures us, he has discovered that "Russian and American . . . hearts pulsate in the same way." They long for peace.

Chazov and other Soviet bloc doctors are what give the organization its uniqueness. Hands across the waters. The problem is not just the relentless "moral equivalence" of the message (a random example: the group's current newsletter features official greetings from the pope and the Communist Party boss of Bulgaria) but the political equivalence implied in the structure of the IPPNW. There is an elaborate pretense that Soviet bloc doctors are, like the Western doctors, an independent group for influencing public opinion and pressuring government at home. The Western doctors do not seem to notice, or perhaps to care, that their East bloc colleagues

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never take a position contrary to the current Soviet line.

In the current, pre-Nobel newsletter, Chazov continues: "When we speak of the need to . . . stop the arms race on earth and prevent it in space, we think of the lives of our patients." And not the words of Mikhail Gorbachev? The phrase "stop the arms race on earth and prevent it in space" is the precise wording of the current official Soviet position on arms control. The other cochairman, Harvard cardiologist Bernard Lown, concurs: "The most ominous development [among 'war preparations'], taking us to the edge of the abyss, is the proposal of a space-based ballistic missile defense."

The IPPNW has also proposed a comprehensive test ban (CTB), the "freeze," and no first use. These are not called proposals, however, but "medical prescriptions," a conceit characteristic of the loopy narcissism of the political doctors: the term sounds politically neutral ("one CTB, every five years, for anxiety") and authoritative ("take as directed, NO REFILLS"). It happens that the CTB, the freeze, and no first use, as well as relentless opposition to any strategic defense, are the official Soviet position (though the IPPNW did propose the CTB before Gorbachev did) and opposed by the United States. Objectively, as the Marxists like to say, there is a coincidence of interests between the Soviets and the IPPNW.

It has to be so. Not because the American doctors are Soviet agents (they are simply American naïfs), but because the Soviet doctors are. (Chazov, for example, is a member of the Communist Party Central Committee.) And they must be. Otherwise they would be not sipping champagne at symposia in exotic capitals with Western counterparts. Were they like those Soviets, such as Dr. Vladimir Brodsky, who favor Soviet-American understanding on terms different from Gorbachev's, they would be in jail or psychiatric prison.

This prize, in the great tradition of those awarded Sean McBride and Le Duc Tho, will do much for the fund-raising and amour propre of the nuclear prescribers. It will do little for peace.

NOTEBOOK

□ TERROR DOUBLE STANDARD: Arab-Americans could be forgiven for feeling a bit paranoid about news coverage—that is, lack of coverage—of the bomb that exploded October 11 in the Santa Ana, California, office of the Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee. The bomb killed the committee's regional director, Alex Odeh, and injured seven others. This horrible story of terrorist murder within our own borders didn't even make page one of either *The New York Times* or *The Washington Post*. In the *Times*, amid pages and pages about the hijack of the *Achille Lauro*—in which one person also was killed—the terror bomb in California rated a nine-inch UPI dispatch on page five the day after it happened and an even shorter A.P. follow-up the next day. *Times* columnist William Safire included Odeh in a list of American terror victims he invoked in calling on President Reagan to boycott the U.N. because of its invitation to Yasir Arafat. We share Safire's views about Arafat, but Alex Odeh definitely did not. ("We commend Arafat for his positive role," he said on TV the night before he died.) So it seems a bit cynical to use his death in this way. Meanwhile, the hateful Jewish Defense League disclaimed responsibility for the bombing but praised it anyway. It ought to go without saying that the murder of Alex Odeh was as heinous as that of Leon Klinghoffer, and bringing Odeh's murderers to justice is just as urgent a task.

ON THE HILL

GRAMM STRIKES AGAIN

IT WAS 3 A.M., October 9, in the Senate chamber and Minority Leader Robert Byrd had the floor. After refusing for nearly a week to permit a vote on the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings balanced budget plan, he had at last relented at the urging of fellow Democrats. Hours of negotiation involving a swarm of members in the well of the Senate had ensued, and at last it was agreed: the vote would occur the following afternoon at three. Now, though, Byrd had found a parliamentary flaw in the procedure for the vote and was lecturing the Senate on the rules. Democrat Chris Dodd of Connecticut, slumped in his chair behind Byrd, put his forefinger to his temple and released an imaginary pistol hammer with his thumb. It was an apt gesture. Senate Democrats had been self-destructing all week on an issue they had thought was theirs: the record federal deficit.

How could this happen? This was the week, long awaited by the Democrats, when Senate Republicans had to face the terrible embarrassment of supporting their president in raising the national debt limit to more than two trillion dollars, twice what it was when Ronald Reagan came to town promising to balance the budget. The Republicans had postponed the moment as long as they could as they searched for some form of political cover. What they found, however, proved to be far more than just cover. It came in the form of an amendment conceived by freshmen Phil Gramm of Texas and Warren Rudman of New Hampshire, later joined by Democrat Ernest Hollings of South Carolina. The concept was simple. The president would have to submit, and Congress would have to adopt, budgets over the next five fiscal years with deficits gradually declining to zero. If at the end

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of any year the deficit was found to be more than five percent (seven percent the first two years) above the specified target, the president and Congress would have a chance to agree on a way to make up the difference. If that failed, the job would be done for them automatically by uniform, across-the-board spending cuts. Nothing would be spared except payments on the national debt and contractual obligations the government could not legally avoid. The law would be suspended in the event of war or recession.

The idea spread among Senate Republicans like the flu. On Thursday, October 3, it got the Senate GOP's formal endorsement. House Republican leaders, who hadn't agreed with their Senate counterparts on much of anything to do with the budget all year, joined up that afternoon. Tip O'Neill, who certainly didn't like the idea, said he could envision it passing the House. And President Reagan, despite the potential danger to defense spending, added his approval the next morning. That afternoon, with the extension of the debt limit before the Senate, Majority Leader Robert Dole introduced the plan as an amendment and asked unanimous consent for a vote. By now the sponsors had made a politically crucial adjustment by placing Social Security outside its scope. After that the plan had begun to look like the last helicopter out of Saigon. Everyone seemed to be getting aboard, including such liberal Democrats as Dodd and John Kerry. There were exceptions. New idea or not, Gary Hart didn't like it, and he was the first to object to Dole's request for immediate action. And Byrd let it be known there would be, as he put it, "no vote today, tomorrow, or the next day." In other words, the Democrats would filibuster. Now, though, the fact that the limit on the national debt was about to be breached was working in the Republicans' favor because before long the government would no longer be able to borrow money and the Treasury Department was issuing solemn warnings that checks would start bouncing.

BYRD and the Democrats proposed a temporary extension of the debt to get the Treasury past its claimed emergency and allow Democrats time to examine the proposal. "We can't legislate with a cocked pistol at our temples," Byrd complained. Anyone who has watched the Senate in action during an adjournment rush had to chuckle at that. Dole quipped that he wanted to move ahead right away because "the longer something hangs around here, it gets stale. People start reading it." He kept the Senate in session all through the weekend of October 5, refusing to allow a temporary debt extension without a vote on the deficit plan first. This was the smart thing to do, of course, but neither Dole nor anyone else on the Republican side had much choice. Gramm, Rudman, and others were prepared to filibuster in order to prevent a temporary debt extension. The House Republican leaders who had embraced the plan a day earlier could hardly have done otherwise in view of the spreading enthusiasm for it among their rank and file. As for President Reagan, he obviously had been advised that there was no way he would get Senate Republicans to vote for any extension of the debt limit without a major deficit reduction package attached.

ALL THIS was the result of a new fact of political life that members of Congress had discovered back home during the August recess. Despite the conventional political wisdom that the budget deficit is a boring, abstruse issue that people don't care about, voters were putting it far ahead of tax reform and even, in most places, far ahead of the Democrats' pet new issue of trade protection. With 22 Republican Senate seats up next year, Republicans are worried and they leapt to embrace the Gramm-Rudman plan. With only 12 seats at stake next year, the Democrats had less reason to panic. Nevertheless, despite a series of seemingly interminable party caucuses, they never got together on a response to Gramm-Rudman.

Even though a few Democrats signed up as cosponsors and many of them ended up voting for the plan, it was clear from the start that the Democrats, and especially Democratic leaders, didn't like it one bit. At first some of them said they didn't think it would work. But what really seemed to bother them was the prospect that it *would* work. Delaware's garrulous Joe Biden came out of a party caucus on October 4 and repeated a colleague's bitter remark that Gramm-Rudman would give Phil Gramm "perfect symmetry." He had destroyed the government's revenue base with the Gramm-Latta amendment of 1981, the huge tax cut that put Reaganomics into law. Now, said this unnamed Democrat, Gramm will "guarantee the demise of the social sector" of the government. In the same vein, Gary Hart, who led the charge against the plan, said on the Senate floor the next afternoon, "I smell a rat. This is the tail of the rat."

Hart and other Democrats, including George Mitchell of Maine and Paul Sarbanes of Maryland, spent much of Saturday, October 5, firing questions at Rudman on the Senate floor, looking for some weakness in the plan. Rudman, with relief help from Hollings, fended them off. Democrats could not believe that the automatic spending cuts envisioned by the plan really would be uniform and across-the-board. (In fact, they wouldn't. Social Security and debt payments are exempt, and cuts in the so-called entitlements programs that have automatic cost-of-living adjustments would affect only the COLAs, not their base. But this was hardly a provision Democrats could complain about.) Nevertheless, they persisted in believing this was in reality a handoff of budget-cutting authority to the president, who would be able to choose which programs to cut. Michigan Democrat Carl Levin drafted an amendment designed to ensure that the president's role in the process would be nothing more than "ministerial," a word heard often in the debate. The sponsors accepted the amendment, and agreed to accept several others proposed by Democrats.

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Still, the Democrats protested. Tip O'Neill railed against Phil Gramm, saying he was "more responsible than anyone except Reagan for the mess the country is in." Liberal Democrats generally hate Phil Gramm, partly because he once was a Democrat, but mostly because he is so conservative, so smart, and so effective. Through all this, Gramm was ubiquitous, voluble, and unflappable. At one point, reporters cornered him by an elevator outside the Senate chamber and asked him about Tip O'Neill's comments. "I don't consider eight million new jobs a mess," he replied. "I don't think stopping inflation is a mess either. But Tip's right about one thing. We promised to balance the budget and we haven't done it. We're trying to do that now and I'd like to have Tip's help." Gramm then smiled and got on the elevator, leaving reporters, most of whom seem to dislike Gramm as much as the Democrats, shaking their heads.

ANOTHER PROBLEM for Democrats, of course, is that many of them believe we need a tax increase. But after the Mondale experience of 1984, and with Reagan goading them to "make my day" by passing new taxes that he can veto, congressional Democrats are no more eager to insist on higher taxes than Republicans are to demand cuts in Social Security. The Gramm-Rudman plan's last-resort provisions provide only for spending cuts, not a tax increase.

Senators Pat Moynihan of New York and Al Gore of Tennessee took the floor on Tuesday, October 8, the day before the vote, to discuss what Gore called the "startling" fact that the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings plan would make no cuts in the current year's budget and none in next year's. The ostensible reason is that the current fiscal year's deficit—the starting point of the plan—won't be known until October 1986. But Moynihan and Gore observed with indignation that this timetable also gets the Republicans past the 1986 election without making any of the draconian spending cuts their plan will entail.

But the Democrats' alleged dismay that the plan won't start to hurt soon enough didn't have much impact. Indeed, the next day, October 9, Gore voted for the plan anyway. And so did other liberal Democrats including Edward Kennedy, Paul Simon, Biden, Levin, and Jay Rockefeller. It passed 75 to 24. On October 11, the House voted overwhelmingly to endorse the goal, though not necessarily the means, of the Gramm-Rudman plan.

So now the plan is headed for a House-Senate conference. Some of the urgency had been taken out of the issue by the Treasury Department's discovery that it can use the borrowing authority of the Federal Financing Bank to get it through the end of the month. Sooner or later, though, a serious version of the bill will come to the House floor, where an all-out effort against it by the Democratic leadership is well under way.

Apart from its political implications, the sudden emergence of this plan is proof that the elaborate budget process Congress conceived ten years ago has utterly failed. The problem has not been neglect. In fact, the budget process has gotten at least as much attention and effort in the past five years as the Middle East peace process. The results have been comparable, too.

BRIT HUME

Brit Hume covers the Senate for ABC News.

A new issue for the right wing.

THE POLITICS OF AIDS

A NASTY political fight over AIDS is developing, and it has nothing to do with whether enough money is being spent to find a cure. The new AIDS battle is over proposals for stringent restrictions on the lives of gay men, in order to control the spread of the disease. Advocates—just a handful of conservative Republicans, so far—cast the issue as an urgent matter of public health. But they also see great untapped political potential in a growing public fear of AIDS that the press and other politicians have been too snobbish or dainty to take seriously. Paul Weyrich, the influential Washington-based New Right leader, says that AIDS "is the hidden issue that can reframe the 1986 election." And traditional conservative concerns such as promoting federalism and reducing burdensome government are not going to be allowed to get in the way.

The House voted October 2 on a proposal by Republican Robert K. Dornan of California to give the surgeon general authority to close down every gay bathhouse in the country. Bill Green, a Republican who represents the Bathhouse Belt on the East Side of Manhattan, warned that this might only worsen the AIDS epidemic. How so? By shutting down places where gays can be educated about AIDS, said Green. Ted Weiss, a Democrat from New York City's West Side, ridiculed the measure as unnecessary, saying the surgeon general already has authority enough. Henry Waxman, a Democrat whose district includes the homosexual-run city of West Hollywood, took the same tack. And like Weiss, he urged the surgeon general to be wary of overruling local public health officials. These arguments got nowhere. The Dornan bill passed 417 to eight. Both Weiss and Waxman sheepishly voted for it.

There are other stirrings. In a national poll taken in October by Arthur Finkelstein, AIDS was cited as one of the most important issues facing the country. It came in ninth, but what's significant is that it ranked for the first time. In New York City, Ed Koch's obscure Republican opponent for mayor, Diane McGrath, has made closing bathhouses, bars, porn shops, and theaters catering to

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homosexuals her lone issue. These places, she declared, are breeding grounds for AIDS and "a clear and evident menace to the health of their patrons." This issue hasn't made McGrath a threat to Koch's reelection, but it has put pressure on him to reverse his decision not to shut down the city's bathhouses. Governor Mario Cuomo may beat him to the punch, though, by shutting down all bathhouses in New York state.

The press is also taking a harsher look at bathhouses and the homosexual life-style. In a news story on October 14, *The New York Times* said: "Bathhouse, of course, is a misnomer. It is a euphemism for an establishment generally reserved for anonymous, multipartner sex: a place long the preserve of sexually compulsive men or those who want to avoid more public gathering places because they have not revealed their homosexuality."

IN WASHINGTON the most persistent advocate of tough measures to control AIDS is Weyrich. He has been badgering representatives and senators for months, and recently his organization circulated on Capitol Hill a list of policy options for combating AIDS. Among the options were "national screening for AIDS," "mandatory reporting of all intercourse contacts" by male homosexuals, and permitting insurance companies to deny coverage to AIDS carriers while forcing the insurance industry to build "AIDS hospices." Weyrich asserts that it is good politics to portray AIDS as a community health issue and downgrade it as a civil rights issue. The public is deeply worried about the spread of AIDS, he says. "Here's a case of the number one talked about issue in every household in America. You hear it on every talk show. It's on the front page of newspapers day after day. Yet Congress has closed its eyes and the administration has been even worse. The public senses a very deep problem, one where their safety and welfare are threatened. The politicians have been scared because the homosexual lobby, like the civil rights lobby, has exaggerated importance in Washington."

One politician who hasn't been spooked is Bill Dannemeyer, a Republican representative from California. (His district abuts Dornan's in Orange County.) On October 1, Dannemeyer surprised his colleagues on the House floor with a clinical description of the homosexual sex act that can cause AIDS. "God's plan for man was Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve," he said, "and when a human male penis is inserted. . . ." Well, you'll have to imagine the rest, but the *Congressional Record* printed every graphic word. The same day that Dornan's bill passed the House, Dannemeyer sought a vote on his measure to give nurses and health care aides the right to wear protective garments while treating AIDS patients. He said nurses at San Francisco General had been barred from wearing such gear by hospital officials who are homosexuals themselves and don't want to upset AIDS patients. A procedural move kept Dannemeyer's bill from being voted on.

He vowed to return in late October with five fresh bills. One would make it a felony for anyone in the AIDS high-risk group to donate blood—a person with AIDS, an intravenous drug user, a hemophiliac, anyone who'd had a transfusion in the last year, or any male who has had sex with another male since 1977. Another would forbid "discrimination against nurses and health care practitioners [who want to use] protective garments in treating AIDS patients." A third would prohibit anyone with AIDS from serving as a doctor, nurse, or any kind of health care practitioner. Another would deny federal funds to any city that fails to shut down its bathhouses. And still another would block children with AIDS from attending regular public schools.

Clearly Dannemeyer isn't fooling around. He's already weathered attacks in Los Angeles for having brought a Nebraska psychologist named Paul Cameron on his payroll for a month last summer. Cameron favors quarantining all homosexuals (Dannemeyer doesn't agree), and he was tossed out of the American Psychological Association for violating its code of ethics. In August Dannemeyer urged the Public Health Service to bar male homosexuals from giving blood. A month later, the agency decreed that gays "should not" donate blood. On his five proposals, Dannemeyer's problem is finding a germane bill to which he can attach them as amendments. If he does, House members may figure it's risky to vote against them, even though there is no evidence that AIDS can be transmitted through the kinds of casual contact that several of the bills would forbid. After all, who wants to be seen as an ally of AIDS?

"To vote against these would cause serious political harm to members in most districts of the country," Dannemeyer says. Even draconian steps such as quarantining AIDS victims or all male homosexuals are gaining in popularity, says a conservative pollster, citing one poll that showed that a third of the public favors quarantine. "Until this fall, I would have said a quarantine was going too far. Now I don't know." Besides, the pollster adds, AIDS is a dream issue for conservative zealots, particularly those in the Christian right. "It justifies their prejudices against homosexuals, and it gets Africans, too. If it would only strike at the Soviets, it'd be perfect."

STILL, many conservatives are squeamish about addressing the AIDS issues. "They run screaming from the room when you mention AIDS," says Weyrich. "Nobody in Congress feels comfortable talking about an issue that verges on homosexual rights," says Newt Gingrich, the Georgia Republican who recently took up the AIDS issue. "You look bizarre. You look kooky." But this is rapidly changing. "The reason this is going to become a major public policy problem is that more people will have died by the end of this year of AIDS than will have died in air crashes in the entire history of American aviation." Few public health officials, Gingrich adds, including those in the Reagan administration, are aware of the rising public anxiety. "Prudent behavior historically would be to seal off the disease, find a cure, and then relax. The public

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Donald H. Minkler, M.D., M.P.H., Director, Center for Population and Reproductive Health Policy, University of California

How to prevent abortion.

As a doctor I know that outlawing abortions doesn't stop them. It just makes them extremely dangerous. When abortion was illegal, I treated women maimed and crippled by self-induced and back-alley abortions. I remember vividly the gruesome suffering and needless deaths that resulted from this butchery.

Women, throughout history, have had abortions whenever they felt it was their only option. Outlawing abortions won't stop women from having them.

The only way to prevent abortion is to eliminate the cause. Unwanted pregnancy. Here's how:

First, we can make birth control more easily available. This is obvious but the same people who want to outlaw abortion also want to prohibit access to birth control, especially for young people.

Second, young people need a better teacher than experience. Sex education teaches youngsters how their bodies work before it's too late.

Third, we can give young people the opportunities and self-esteem they need to make better decisions about their future.

Fourth, if you're a man, accept your share of the responsibility. No woman has ever gotten pregnant by herself.

Fifth and finally, we can develop better birth control methods. That takes more esearch. And a lot of public support.

These are five humane and effective ways to prevent abortion. If you agree, use the coupon.

Planned Parenthood believes people should have better choices to begin with. Not have them taken away.

The decision is yours.

☐ I've written my representatives in Congress to tell them I support: government programs that reduce the need for abortion by preventing unwanted pregnancy; and keeping safe and legal abortion a choice for all women.

☐ Here's my tax-deductible contribution in support of all Planned Parenthood activities and programs: ☐ $25 ☐ $35 ☐ $50 ☐ $75 ☐ $150 ☐ $500 ☐ or: $_____

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health bureaucracy wants to relax first, then seal off the disease, then find a cure."

Gingrich says homosexuals "are risking a very bad backlash" if they oppose measures to stop the spread of AIDS. But conservatives who exploit the AIDS issue also may be courting trouble. "The issue hasn't focused politically yet," says Craig Shirley, a political consultant and former official of the National Conservative Political Action Committee. "But when it does, it's going to be politically explosive, which means it could blow up in your face." The problem, says a conservative pollster, is distinguishing between fear and hate. It's one thing to try to respond to the public's legitimate fear of AIDS, another to use the issue to vent hatred of homosexuals. Nothing wrong with playing on fear, the consultant adds, so long as hatred is stifled. The public often recoils at a hate campaign. Naturally, everyone involved denies hating gays. "I'm not for gay-bashing," says Weyrich. "I have compassion for those people who've gotten themselves into a reprobate mind-set. But we have a community welfare problem . . . and it's the homosexual community and its life-style that has made this a public health hazard."

FRED BARNES

TNR goes on a date.

WASHINGTON ROMANCE

THIS MAGAZINE recently offered me a choice assignment that, for various reasons, I was unable to do. No, not ethical reasons—unfortunately, the modern freelancer does not enjoy the luxury of such self-indulgent posturing. I'm talking about logic and stuff. Put yourself in this real-life situation:

You are roaming Washington, D.C., in search of an idea, when you see the following item in *Erotic Arts & Leisure Review*, a sex-classifieds paper vended on the streets: "GOVERNMENT STUDS WANTED. Male STUDS are being employed by Prince Georges County, Maryland, to locate and set up for police sexually promiscuous women who are subsequently arrested. Call the County Attorney's office to apply for the job."

You're probably thinking, "Super story idea." Get some leather chaps, a Lucite codpiece, and a *tiny* concealable tape recorder, and you're on your way to a madcap *Playboy* article, a TV movie starring Ken Norton as you, and a dizzy toboggan ride to the bank. I know. I thought so too.

But then I had to stop dreaming, *think*, and submit myself to glaring self-scrutiny. "Do I have what it takes to be a government stud?" I thought I knew. Later, objective yet caring friends—the ones who laugh with me and not at me when they call me "coat hanger shoulders"—assured me I did not.

For you, all this is simply a fascinating and baffling intellectual exercise. For me, it's a daily professional ordeal. Last month—again, for practical reasons—I had to render painful "no" decisions on two proposals from national publications.

"How the National Corrugated Metal Pipe Manufacturers' Association *Really* Works." For the National Corrugated Metal Pipe Manufacturers' Association newsletter, *The Culvert*. Required one year spent rising fist-first through the NCMPMA ranks. And "Rabbit Man Versus The Pagans!"—a first-person original for *R.V. Eldervolk* magazine. The idea was to have me enter a succession of East Coast biker bars and say . . . anything, and then escape in my 45-horsepower Volkswagen Rabbit. Tempting, but they only offered payment upon survival.

THE SAME PROBLEM came up again when TNR suggested that I engage the services of Liaison, a high-class Washington-area escort service catering to executive sleazes who come to Power Town haunted by images of Rita Jenrette on the Capitol steps. Alluring? Yes. From the slick, four-color pages of Liaison's promotional brochure, the foxy, mannequin gazes of its "representatives" seem to say . . . well, according to the brochure, they say, "We are available for Racquetball, Theatre, Jacuzzi, Museum, Health Spa, Shopping/Tourism, Business Function/Meeting, and Administrative—Girl/Guy Friday." Uh huh. And all that for only $500 per four-hour appointment.

TNR was willing to pay the $500, throw in a tuxedo, and arrange for an invitation to an embassy party. It was a great idea, with plenty of inherently funny material: "Our companion representatives have completed a minimum of two years of college, and they are well versed in international and local affairs. A number of our representatives are fluent in other languages. They are all certified in cardiopulmonary resuscitation. . . ."

It almost wrote itself. "After enjoying an elegant meal (shrimp rémoulade, combination salad w/wax beans and Ranch dressing, Coke Classic) served on pontoon trays in the Jacuzzi, I and my foxy, intelligent, and *très internationale* Liaison representative had fun aplenty discussing the lighter side of Treasury II's effects on the equipment-leasing industry. Later, my sides still aching from her impression of a lessor losing his investment tax credit, we played a rousing game of racquetball, wearing only socks.

" 'Tell me—*oof!*—what do you think—*oof!*—of the Hawley-Smoot Tariff Act of 1930?' *(I keel over.)*

" *'Mon opposition a la ciudad de Flintstones contra la protectionatergischte est* (wham! a winner) *unyieldent!'* (Translation: My bedrock opposition to protectionism is unyielding.)"

Again, though, there were logistical problems. First of all, the studs pictured in the Liaison brochure were those rich, dapper, silver-haired, *M*-magazine-type gents who get regular manicures and always smell like talc. A tough

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image for me to project. For example, I know from experience that when I rent a tux, no matter how precise my instructions, somewhere along the line somebody will decide that my waist and inseam measurements are a typographical error. Result: tuxedo pants that must be safety-pinned at the waist. Therefore I was likely to be exposed or, more likely, laughed at when I wasn't looking.

Second, in real life, people never say what you plan on them saying.

Third, I didn't like the tone of some of Liaison's "Your Personality Profile" questions:

"If I disagree with someone, I don't hesitate to tell the person that I'm probably wrong."

"I wear what pleases me, regardless of whether the pants fit."

Fourth, Representative #117A. To be honest, first, second, and third I could have lived with, but not #117A. As pictured in the brochure, she appears to be an amalgam of Kay Ballard, the Gorgon Medusa, my eighth-grade English teacher, and the entire Bundt-Cake Caucus of Eagle Forum.

Horrible, and all too likely to be more than a fantasy. The Liaison contract had some very fine print: ". . . in the event that the representative you select is ill, we reserve the right to . . ." Read: it doesn't matter whom you ask for—we'll give you #117A.

Still, turning down those two magazine assignments left me technically unemployed until Thanksgiving, so I needed the money. The TNR experience reminded me yet again how often journalistic conventions had vexed me over the years. My initial reaction was rage. Why does this society insist that one has to "research" and "do" things before one can write about them? How many times had that ungainly obstacle—work—stood between me and cash-bringing manuscript? After that I sank pretty low and considered some terrible ideas—pocketing the $500, not going on the date, making the story up, even returning my tuxedo on a wire hanger.

Then one afternoon, as I sat in my office staring morosely at the men who were carting away my word-processing unit, a harsh and insistent voice forced its way into my mind: "Don't be a chump! Make it up! It happens all the time, believe me!" I hung up the phone. Though I was surprised and shocked to hear TNR's editor say these things, I had agreed.

Now I have a new problem. As I thought it might, the Liaison experience, freed of journalism's archaic strictures, has taken on a sweep and grandeur that was missing before. Physically and literarily, I've beefed up my own character somewhat. I'm now Alex Axlerod, a tan and sensually chiseled congressional A.A. who, when he's not crime solving, teaches inner-city kids how to fight off drug dealers with martial arts. As for my Liaison "contact," I'll just say two words: Tina Turner.

ALEX HEARD

Alex Heard is available for less than $125/hour.

The boom in bashing black leaders.

WHO'S 'OUT OF TOUCH'?

ARE BLACK leaders out of touch with black people? A poll appearing in the August-September issue of *Public Opinion* magazine, a publication of the American Enterprise Institute, purports to answer the question with a definitive "yes." Conducted by Linda Lichter, the co-director of the Center for Media and Public Affairs, the survey claims that there are vast differences between black people and black leaders on major issues. Lichter says, for example, that 59 percent of U.S. black leaders favor disinvestment in South Africa while 74 percent of all American blacks favor continued investment. She reports that only 39 percent of the leaders said blacks were "making progress," while 66 percent of the rank and file saw progress.

The editors of *The Wall Street Journal* editorial page were impressed by these numbers. In a lead editorial on September 30, they welcomed the "long overdue criticism" of black leaders and hoped it would "provide an opening for a new breed of black leaders less given to . . . liberal posturing." Others too may begin to cite Lichter as a credible authority on the "out of touch" question. This is unfortunate because the Lichter poll is shoddy, disingenuous, and slightly ugly.

Consider how Lichter came to the conclusion that three-quarters of American blacks support continued investment in South Africa. She opens with a tasteful summary of the controversy: "Recently there has been a great deal of discussion about racial discrimination in South Africa." This frames the issue in the objective tradition of Ronald Reagan: South Africans recently discovered a racial problem in their midst—just as we did many moons ago.

Lichter then summarizes the case for sanctions: "Some people say that American corporations should not be allowed to invest money there and that corporations already having investments there should be forced to sell them." By not mentioning the purpose of these measures, Lichter makes sanctions seem like vindictive party pooperism. Who is against "investment" in the abstract?

By contrast, Lichter's anti-sanctions summary is pure Reaganite applesauce: "Other people say that American corporations should be allowed to remain in South Africa so that they may use their influence to help promote equality for black people." After ignoring the aims of one policy alternative and describing the aims of the other in the most cheerful manner possible, Lichter then genuflects to the altar of fairness: "Which of these two positions comes closer to your own?"

What if Lichter were to frame the question in a slightly different but equally tendentious way? Something like: "Recently the South African government reaffirmed its commitment to white supremacy. Some people say that

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the American government should actively prevent U.S. firms from profiting from this situation, so as to promote equality for black people. Other people say the U.S. should condone the U.S. business operations under apartheid. Which of these two positions is closer to your own?" I am certain Lichter would be astounded by the results.

ON AFFIRMATIVE ACTION, Lichter asks blacks and black leaders if they believe that "minorities should be given preference" or if "ability should be the main consideration." The question implies that "ability" and "preference" are the primary choices in the affirmative action debate. But in the most problematic affirmative action situations, such as the Memphis fire fighters' case, we face a different dilemma. Should we arbitrarily protect people's jobs on the basis of their race, or should we arbitrarily protect their jobs on the basis of seniority? Which makes you more deserving: the accident of having been born with black skin or the accident of having been hired first? "Ability" has little to do with it.

At the end of the survey, Lichter stumbles from sloppiness into racism. Her penultimate question is, "Do you think it is appropriate for leaders of black groups in the United States to play a role in U.S. foreign policy?" It is unlikely—to put it mildly—that Lichter will ever ask the white public the same question about "the leaders of white groups" and "the leaders of Jewish groups." Only someone who believes that the legitimacy of whites or Jews making U.S. foreign policy is problematic would ask such a question—someone like Louis Farrakhan.

Think about the uncomfortable ironies here. Suppose that a rising black leader took seriously the conventional wisdom that black leaders are "out of touch." Suppose that he then hired one Linda Lichter to find out what his followers believed. As part of this effort, suppose that Lichter asked a random sample of black people, "Do you think it is appropriate or inappropriate for leaders of Jewish groups in the United States to play a role in U. S. foreign policy?" Say that 17 percent of the blacks surveyed said "inappropriate" (the same percentage of blacks who said a foreign policy role for black leaders was inappropriate). And finally, imagine that the black leader published Lichter's findings in the publication of a respected think tank in Washington, D.C.

It takes no imagination at all to conjure up the fierce denunciations of the black leader, of Lichter, of the poll, and of the magazine that would immediately follow. Yet Lichter asks the same question in the pay of white people, and she receives hearty applause from the largest-circulation daily newspaper in the country. Lichter, of course, is in no way comparable to Farrakhan. She is not a dangerous demagogue, and she is not seeking to arouse ugly passions. But she has unwittingly voiced a strain of casual contempt among whites for blacks and black political aspirations. The notion that it may be "inappropriate" for black leaders to play a role in critical governmental duties is not an obsession with her, just a passing assumption. Worse than being a reactionary bigot, she is a disinterested social scientist. Her sincerity runs as deep as her bias. Personally she does not inhabit the same moral plane as Farrakhan—but her unconscious racism is offensive nonetheless. It is not so much her Jim Crow question and her manipulative poll that make her worrisome as it is her typicality. She is an up-and-coming operative in the public opinion industry whose basic assumptions are rapidly becoming the soul of political chic.

If black leaders such as NAACP president Benjamin Hooks and Atlanta mayor Andrew Young now begin urging the American Enterprise Institute to disown Lichter's question and her poll, AEI officials will surely be reluctant to comply. If black leaders such as Los Angeles mayor Tom Bradley urge AEI to dissociate itself from the white leaders with long records of public racism who quote Lichter with approval, they will surely be ignored. Indeed, if black leaders even raise the issue, they will be told they are being overly sensitive and that they should have more respect for free speech.

There is obviously a double standard at work here, and it is understandable that black politicians should deeply resent it, especially when it is imposed in the guise of putative concern for black people. Still, they only reinforce the double standard when they refuse to condemn Farrakhan's bigotries. Their hesitation helps legitimize racism, thereby making it easier for whites to rationalize it among themselves. Unfair as it is, black leaders bear a heavier burden of leadership on racial issues.

The "Are black leaders out of touch?" question as it is posed by Lichter intends to make this burden even more onerous. People who will insist that black leaders ranging from National Urban League president John Jacob to Berkeley congressman Ronald Dellums must accept Lichter's findings will be insisting that black leaders must accept racist assumptions—that South African apartheid is mere "racial discrimination," that black involvement in U.S. foreign policy is somehow open for public debate. The implicit premise of Lichter's poll is that black leaders must accept racism in order to win legitimacy in the eyes of white America.

There is at least one black leader who has dutifully fulfilled that request: Farrakhan. To be sure, he urges blacks to accept a different set of racist assumptions than those proposed by Lichter and the *Journal* editors. Where some white public opinion leaders want blacks to swallow implicit white racism, Farrakhan serves up explicit black racism. But Farrakhan knows that responding in kind helps forge a warlike solidarity against the white man.

THE CURIOUS contradictions of the "out of touch" theory hardly stop here. Those who attack black leaders for being "out of touch" with the black community are often the first to complain when any black leader begins to attract a large following with the black community. What is frightening about Farrakhan is not how "out of touch" he is, but how "in touch" he is. What disturbed many people about Jesse Jackson's campaign in 1984 was not how superficially it was supported by black

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people but how passionately it was supported. It seems that the more black leaders prove how "in touch" they are with the black community, either by winning votes or drawing large audiences, the more "out of touch" they are said to be.

The black public also persists in reelecting allegedly "out of touch" politicians such as New York representative Charles Rangel and Chicago mayor Harold Washington. The black rank and file continues to support the black leaders from whom they are supposedly alienated. One conclusion to be drawn is that the "out of touch" charge is really just a polite way of saying that black people are out of touch. But to phrase the point this way suggests that it is white people, not black leaders, whom blacks are out of touch with. And this raises two unpleasant possibilities: either white people share significant responsibility for the situation, or they don't—and black Americans deserve their isolation.

In any case, the solution for these out-of-touch black people is often said to be up-and-coming conservative black leaders. It may be. But these leaders are distinguished, at least for the moment, as much for their ability to get "in touch" with whites as for their ability to reach blacks. This is encouraging, but the difference between the black and white vote in the 1984 election should make clear that being in touch with whites and with blacks are two very different things.

Finally, the black politicos who, according to the Lichter-*Journal* criteria, should be most in touch with black people are so out of touch as to be ludicrous. Take the case of William Keyes, the black Republican and former White House aide who now earns $390,000 per year working for the South African government. His job is to explain to Americans exactly how the apartheid regime promotes "equality for black people." If, as Lichter claims, 75 percent of American blacks support continued U.S. investment in South Africa for this purpose, Keyes should enjoy solid support among blacks. He is in touch with Reagan and with the conservative movement. Will Keyes demonstrate that he is equally "in touch" with American blacks by winning any public office higher than dogcatcher in the next decade? Don't bet your Krugerrands on it.

WHO IS out of touch with whom? Black leaders are far more out of touch with white leaders than they are with black people. And white leaders are far more out of touch with black people than they imagine. The growing popularity of Farrakhan testifies to that. Meanwhile, some white leaders are beginning to suspect that major black leaders may be closet Farrakhans. Nathan Perlmutter, national director of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, wonders why Jewish leaders have to go around the country saying "please, pretty please" to coax anti-Farrakhan statements out of black politicians.

One small way to bridge this racial chasm would be for the white leaders of the American Enterprise Institute to disown Lichter as quickly, as publicly, and as unequivocally as they would if she had asked about the appropriateness of Jewish leaders playing a role in foreign policy. Black leaders should disown Farrakhan as quickly, as publicly, and as unequivocally as they would if he were preaching hatred of black people. No "pretty pleases" from anyone.

JEFFERSON MORLEY

Survival tactics on the world stage.

U.N. THEATER

TWENTY MILLION people are estimated to have died in wars since 1945, the year the United Nations was born. Why did the U.N. not *do* something to prevent those wars?

The question is misconceived. The United Nations cannot do anything, and never could. It is not an animate entity or agent. It is a place, a stage, a forum, and a shrine. It can be manipulated, just as the ancient shrine at Delphi used to be. It is also—and this has been its most useful function—a place to which powerful people can repair when they are fearful about the course on which their own rhetoric seems to be propelling them. People go there in certain kinds of crises to save their people's—and their own—skins.

But the main thing that endears the United Nations to member governments, and so enables it to survive, is its proven capacity to fail, and to be seen to fail. If there is something you are expected to do, but don't want to do, or even have done for you, you can safely appeal to the U.N., in the comfortable certainty that it will let you down. This capacity is useful for the selfish purposes of the governments concerned, but it also helps, in its own rather sordid way, to make the world slightly less dangerous.

The U.N. has developed a set of rituals that make it possible for powerful people who have made fools of themselves to climb down and not look quite as foolish as they deserve to look. The classic examples of this use of the United Nations stage are provided by the Suez crisis of 1956, and the Cuban missile crisis of 1962.

Britain and France had intervened in the Canal Zone on the pretext of "separating the combatants," Egypt and Israel. In fact, of course, the intervening powers were acting in collusion with Israel. Once the combatants were separated, Britain and France wanted to get out. They had initially prevented the U.N. from intervening in the crisis; now they called upon the U.N. to shoulder the burden of their acts. A token force made up of contingents from friendly countries—the United Nations Expeditionary Force—was sent to Egypt to pretend to execute the mission for which Britain and France had pretended to go in.

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The combatants were no longer combating, but never mind. The British government professed itself well satisfied with this outcome. By its principled intervention, in the interests of international peace and security, Britain had finally induced the United Nations "to act."

That piece of stagecraft saved perhaps a few thousand lives. Britain and France, under superpower pressure, would soon have been obliged to go, with or without the U.N.'s help. But six years later, millions of lives were at stake. In the famous eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation over Cuban missiles, Khrushchev too needed a decorous retreat. Again, the U.N. proved useful. Secretary General U. Thant appealed to *both* parties: to the United States to "avoid direct confrontation with Soviet ships," and to the Soviet Union to keep its ships away from Cuban waters. Khrushchev immediately agreed. He went on about the Soviet Union's respect for international legality and the principles of the Charter. The Soviet Union was setting an example; now let the United States follow suit. It was not hard for Kennedy to comply with his part of the secretary general's appeal.

It was obviously important to Khrushchev to be seen to "bow" to the secretary general rather than to the power of the United States. If no plausible face-saving machinery had been available, would Khrushchev have let the ships go ahead, in the hope that it was Kennedy who was bluffing? We can never know, but it does seem possible. Khrushchev was a vain, choleric gambler who at times seemed intoxicated by the thought of the enormous power at his disposal. The small factor of the availability of a plausible face-saving device may well have tilted the balance.

Thomas M. Franck, the author of a recent book on the U.N., *Nation Against Nation*, calls the acceptance by both superpowers of the secretary general's appeal "a modest success" for the United Nations. The verdict seems a bit patronizing under the circumstances. More than any other episode in the U.N.'s history, the Cuban missile crisis suggests that the world might be even more unsafe if it weren't for the U.N.'s unimpressive repertoire of tricks.

THE Suez and Cuban crises were cases in which political leaders had gotten into trouble and wanted to wriggle out of it. But there are also cases where political leaders have used the United Nations in order to stay out of trouble that their friends and supporters expected them to get into. The United States used it in this way in 1956 over Hungary; and the Soviet Union in 1982 over Lebanon.

The Eisenhower administration had given many Hungarians the impression that if they set out "to roll back the Iron Curtain," they could count on help from the U.S. When a Hungarian government decided to defy the Soviets, however, the United States decided that backing Hungary was too risky. Understandably, this prudent course was likely to be regarded as reprehensible by those who had believed in Eisenhower-Dulles rhetoric. Eisenhower and Dulles successfully deflected the rising tide of resentment away from the White House and onto the United Nations.

To understand how this worked, one has to consider the peculiar symbiotic relationship that existed between the United States and the United Nations in the U.N.'s first decade. The advent of the United Nations was initially hailed in the United States with enormous ballyhoo. It was expected to be the theater and instrument of a millennial expansion of U.S. power and influence in the world, in "the American Century." And these hopes were not altogether disappointed. From 1945 to 1958, the United States could count on the support of a two-thirds majority in the General Assembly for any proposition for which the U.S. cared enough to lobby and, if necessary, to "twist arms."

Now, in terms of power in the world and the defense of U.S. interests, a two-thirds majority in the U.N. General Assembly isn't very important. But in terms of American *domestic* politics, that majority was very useful indeed. It meant that administration policies would automatically be validated by "world opinion." In these conditions, it was natural for the State Department to glorify the General Assembly, customarily hailed in that epoch as "the moral conscience of mankind." With the Security Council paralyzed by the "Soviet veto," the General Assembly became the focus of all the hopes and idealisms that Americans, far more than any other people, had been encouraged to place in the U.N.

THE United States fought the Korean War under a United Nations flag. The flag was obtained by a bit of luck (and perhaps illegally) through a Security Council vote during the temporary absence of the Soviet representative. When the Soviet representative hurriedly returned, the Americans threw the matter into the General Assembly, which duly upheld the American position by the customary two-thirds. For U.S. purposes, all that was needed was legitimation, a blessing on American arms.

So when the Eisenhower-Dulles government threw the Hungarian case into the United Nations in 1956, it was not immediately apparent that this was designed to sacrifice the Hungarians. But there was a difference between the two cases. In the first, what the U.S. had wanted was an explicit legitimation of U.S. intervention. In the second, what it wanted was an implicit legitimation of U.S. *non*-intervention. The Hungarian rising was crushed, but the United States was not blamed. The U.S. supposedly had its hands tied by the Charter. It looked to the United Nations for action. The United Nations was inherently incapable of action, but could be blamed for failure to act.

The Soviet Union made similar use of the United Nations in 1982. It masked its decision to refrain from intervention in Lebanon—even after the defeat there of its ally Syria, armed with Soviet weapons—by a dramatic performance at the U.N. in the role of champion of the Arabs. The Arabs had to appear to take this seriously because they were making the same sort of use of the U.N. themselves at the time, and because they did not want the Soviets to intervene or to intervene themselves, other than verbally.

Steam was let off; parties were championed in words only; someone was sold down the river; direct confrontation between the superpowers was averted; the "failure of

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the United Nations" was deplored. Business as usual. Shoddy, but probably preferable to the honest, brave courses whose rejection the United Nations theater facilitated by obscuring. Preferable, that is, to American intervention in support of the Hungarians, and Soviet intervention in support of the Syrians (and/or PLO).

These procedures work only if one of the parties wants to get off the hook—as over Suez and Cuban missiles—or avoid getting onto the hook—as over Hungary and Lebanon. In cases where both parties are prepared to go to the bitter end—as, for example, over the Falklands—there is no real role for the U.N. If Margaret Thatcher's government had decided to let General Galtieri get away with his invasion while saving face, it would have left the matter to the United Nations, and the islands to Argentina. But that was not the course chosen.

At the emergency session of the General Assembly, in August 1958, in the wake of the Anglo-American landings at Suez, the United States failed for the first time to muster a two-thirds majority for a draft resolution that it felt it seriously needed. On that day the General Assembly ceased to be the moral conscience of mankind. The general aura of holiness that the United States public had originally been encouraged to imagine as surrounding the U.N. began to dim.

Still, the thing has survived. Almost all countries belong to it, and no country shows any serious sign of starting to get out, U.S. warnings notwithstanding. In certain situations, and in the hole-and-corner ways I have described, it has probably helped others—perhaps millions of others—to survive.

CONOR CRUISE O'BRIEN

Conor Cruise O'Brien's *The Siege* will be published by Simon and Schuster next spring.

How majority rule can work.

AFTER APARTHEID

BY DONALD L. HOROWITZ

"IT'S NOT five minutes to midnight in this country," a South African told me recently. "It's five minutes past midnight." He was not a black anti-apartheid activist, but a white Afrikaner, an establishment academic with close ties to the government. What's more, he is by no means alone. Significant numbers of English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking white intellectuals are now completely out of sympathy with the policies of their government. In fact, white opinion runs the whole spectrum, from extreme right-wingers who think the government's reforms have already given the country away to the blacks, to some of the leaders of the antigovernment United Democratic Front.

It is one of the failings of the American press coverage of South Africa that it has utterly neglected to convey a sense of the diversity of opinion among whites and blacks in that country about the present crisis and alternative futures. The press has performed in accordance with its usual underestimate of the capacity of the American public to understand foreign complexities. It has projected onto South Africa an American diagnosis of the issues and an ethnocentrically American prescription for their resolution.

Significant elements of the problems are similar. Both stem from racial subordination. But there are also critical differences. In the United States, an immigrant society even if some were forced to immigrate, there was no question that blacks had a right to be here. But in South Africa, who belongs where is a central question—not only for the Afrikaners who created the so-called black homelands, but also for some Africans, who claim that the whites are mere colonizers who stand in the same position as the white settlers of, say, Kenya or Zimbabwe. And, of course, there is no parallelism of political prescriptions between the United States and South Africa. The problem in the United States was to incorporate blacks into ongoing, legitimate, democratic institutions. The problem in South Africa is whether such institutions can be created and, if so, how.

The starting point for understanding the present crisis in South Africa is apartheid in its concrete form: "influx control," pass laws, and "group areas." These are the mechanisms the National Party government, in power continuously since 1948, perfected in the 1950s and 1960s.

Influx control is a euphemism for tough restrictions on black migration to cities. Accompanying influx control are

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measures intended to make urban life unattractive for blacks. Large numbers of black workers are forced to live in single-sex hostels far from their families, whom they are not permitted to bring to town and whom they get to visit once or twice a year. The effect on family life has been devastating, but by the government's own figures (which are probably low) nearly 40 percent of all blacks lived in urban areas as of 1980.

The pass is the device used to control people's movements. All blacks are required to carry a fat pass book containing a wide variety of compulsory documents, right down to tax receipts. Hundreds of thousands are arrested for pass law violations every year. Whites must carry a smaller identity document, and there is no criminal penalty for failure to produce it.

THE GOVERNMENT has recently announced its intention to reform influx control and the pass laws. It is, however, merely "studying" that pillar of apartheid, the Group Areas Act. The impact of the Group Areas Act cannot really be described—it needs to be seen.

From the top of a hill overlooking the city of Pietermaritzburg, about 40 miles inland from the Indian Ocean port city of Durban, you get a magnificent view of the city and its environs. In the center of the panorama lies a vast belt of choice land encompassing the heart of the city and its prime residential areas. This land is white. To the left, there are pockets of territory, a small fraction of the size of the white belt, reserved for Indians and Coloureds (people of mixed race) respectively. To the far right, there is a distant and lengthy crescent-shaped valley that holds the overcrowded and poor black townships. Every day in Pietermaritzburg, as in other cities, light-blue buses carry black commuters to work in the morning and home before nightfall.

All land in South Africa is legally "controlled." It requires a permit from a government officer to change the color of ownership of any parcel of land, even if the land is not allocated to a specific group area. In most cities, blacks are relegated, as they are in Pietermaritzburg, to the townships, bedroom developments generally lacking the amenities to sustain a genuine community life. More than a decade ago, control of the black urban areas was transferred from the white municipalities that formerly subsidized them to underfinanced local government boards, with predictable results for municipal facilities in the townships.

The restriction of blacks' spatial mobility, as epitomized by group areas, is the linchpin of apartheid. The relatively few well-off blacks may own superior housing on the fringes of a black township, but even they frequently encounter difficulty obtaining a 99-year lease, so they actually own just the bricks and mortar, as one such owner told me with disgust. The government has succeeded in making the urban areas unattractive to Africans. It is now paying the price for that achievement.

It would be quite wrong, however, to see the present unrest as merely an expression of discontent with material circumstances, unpleasant as they are. The premise of apartheid has always been social inequality, and urban blacks have got the point. No amount of material redress will do. It is the system of subordination that is under attack.

This can be seen in the pattern of unrest that began more than a year ago. The first phase involved school boycotts, precipitated mostly by educational grievances, including corporal punishment, age restrictions on pupils, and lack of recognition of student organizations. Then, in September 1984, township authorities struggling to balance their books announced rent increases. Their tenants, hit hard by recession and growing unemployment, could ill afford to pay. There were rent boycotts and further school boycotts. By October 1984 some 220,000 pupils were out of school.

By then, however, the issues had changed. Elections had recently been held for the two legislative houses provided by a new constitution, one house for Indians and one house for Coloureds. Each house has very limited powers. The black community, completely left out of these arrangements, mobilized against them. Aided by brutal police action in the townships, the violence grew in intensity and spread to urban areas in most parts of the country. The 1985 violence has unambiguously political goals.

At the same time, the violence has grown more complex. There are, of course, the well-known attacks on policemen, township officials, informers, and alleged collaborators. In addition, there are powerful organizational rivalries at work. As the police have lost control of the townships, there has also been a good deal of local thuggery, looting, and attacks on the homes and cars of better-off blacks.

IN 1983 more than 600 community organizations formed the United Democratic Front to oppose the new legislative chambers. The UDF is a multiracial confederation aiming at the abolition of apartheid and the establishment of a new regime. The platform of the UDF runs parallel to that of the banned African National Congress, which operates from its base in Zambia. Since the ANC has been historically at odds with AZAPO, the wholly black Azanian People's Organization, the UDF and AZAPO saw themselves early on as rivals for black support. For now, the UDF has emerged triumphant.

In Natal province, where the Zulu reside and are heavily organized into Chief Gatsha Buthelezi's Inkatha movement, Inkatha and the UDF are still at war. The cycle of house burnings and attacks has proved difficult to control. Leaders on both sides have been forced to hire 24-hour guards.

Elsewhere, a good deal of the violence has taken the form of intimidation designed to enforce a boycott of white shops in the townships. A number of blacks have been killed after they were found to have purchased groceries at unapproved shops. The consumer boycott has been very effective. Shopkeepers who have sued for peace have, in a few locations, proved to be instrumental in

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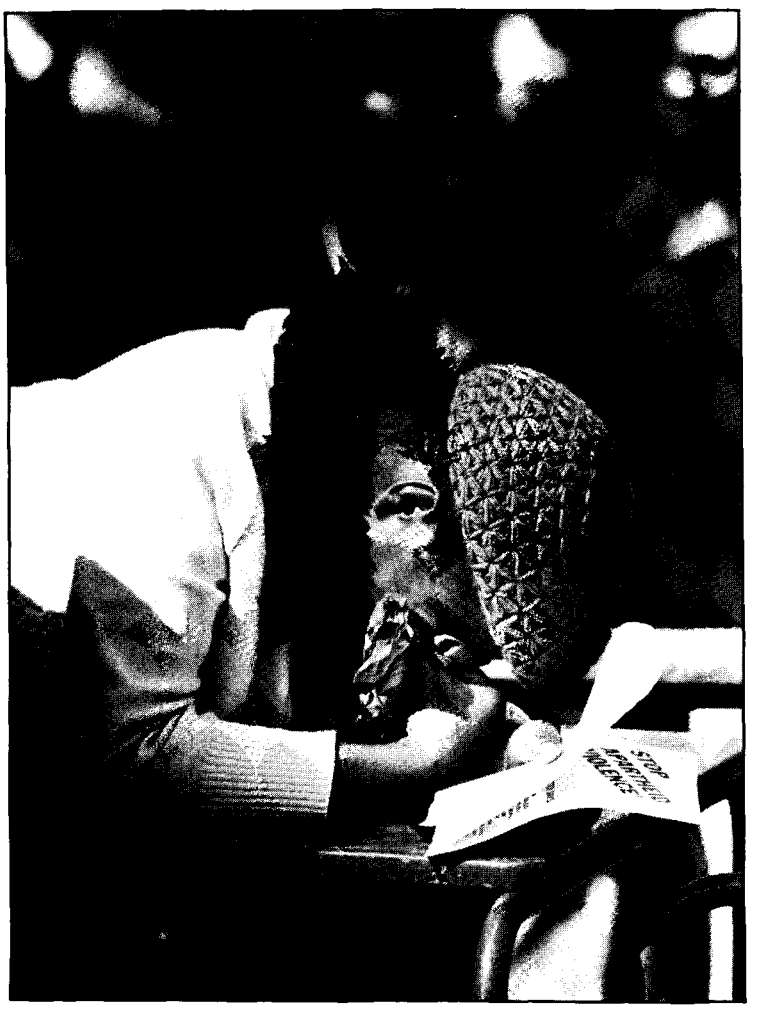
helping to abolish apartheid measures at the local level.

A key element in the growing violence has been the conflict of generations. Parents are no longer able to tell their children to go back to school. As a black professor told me, teenagers are asking their elders, "What has school benefited you?" A leitmotiv of much local violence has been the burning down of beer halls, simultaneously symbols of government revenue drawn from the black community and of the older generation's liquid remedy for political impotence.

As the turmoil continues, it will become more difficult to discern who speaks for the protesters. The UDF is nothing more than a loose confederation, and the youths who have engaged the authorities are not likely to take direction from those who have done no fighting. White businessmen who recently returned from a meeting with the ANC in Zambia said they sensed that ANC leaders are not sanguine about controlling the outcome if the violence goes on too long. Nelson Mandela, the imprisoned ANC leader, is virtually the unanimous leadership choice of the protesters. But if Mandela were released, says a black skeptic, "the young boys would listen to him for only two days and then push him aside. They can be quite ruthless, these young boys."



SARAH LEEN/*PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER*

Even this, however, does not begin to tap the complexity of African leadership. The UDF is an overwhelmingly urban organization. Although its strength has been greatest in Cape Province, where the Xhosa live, the UDF is assuredly national and pan-ethnic. Its members see themselves not as Xhosa, Sotho, Tswana, or Zulu, but rather as black Africans. Needless to say, their bitter experience with white rule and apartheid undergirds the broader identity.

It is not clear that rural Africans see themselves in quite the same way. There is a long history in South Africa of interethnic warfare, much of it the result of British and Afrikaner population movements and conquests. There is every likelihood that rural Africans will retain their ethnic loyalties in ways regarded as anachronistic, if not downright reactionary, by urban blacks. In the words of a UDF leader, "the minds of the rural people have been colonized." Colonized or not, the rural people have not really been heard from in the present turmoil.

There is one notable exception. Gatsha Buthelezi, chief minister of Kwazulu, the Zulu homeland, has been a conspicuous force for compromise with the regime, even as he has shrewdly continued to oppose it. He rejected independence for Kwazulu and has worked toward federating it with surrounding Natal province. Buthelezi has consistently said that the whites would "scorch the earth" if one man-one vote were to be "rammed down their throats by the butt of a gun." Because of his willingness to organize on an ethnic basis and to deal with the white authorities, Buthelezi is anathema to the UDF.

What is by no means certain is that in the end Buthelezi would be alone. The homelands are discredited—dots on the map, obviously splattered there to exclude the black population from South Africa. The leadership of some of the homelands is, to say the least, uninspiring. But the paradox is that there are two or three homeland leaders who command real respect inside and outside the homelands. Such leaders are likely to be at odds with the UDF and the ANC in the planning of a future South Africa.

If that is true of rural black leadership, it is all the more true of much Indian and Coloured leadership. One effect of the unrest has been to polarize Indian and Coloured opinion. In Durban the Natal Indian Congress has been a leading component of the UDF, and some of the most militant UDF and ANC leaders are Indians. Likewise, much of the violence in Capetown has involved Coloureds. But in a recent survey in the Durban area, 53 percent of Indians and 31 percent of Coloureds chose the white president of South Africa, P. W. Botha, as their preferred political leader. There are strong conservative currents among these minorities.

White opinion these days is, if anything, more confused. The conventional wisdom is that Botha and his Cabinet are prevented from negotiating a solution to

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South Africa's problems by fear of a potential right-wing reaction. But that reaction has already occurred, and it has not proved fatal to the regime. There is a rich array of white reactionary organizations, including an Afrikaner Resistance Movement led by a man appropriately named Terreblanche. Convinced that the Nationalists have already made too many concessions to maintain white rule in an undivided state, the various organizations each have their own partition plans. One is more implausible than the next.

The only far-right organization with representation in Parliament is the Conservative Party of Andries Treurnicht. The Conservatives split from the government in 1982 over the issue of separate parliamentary chambers for Coloureds and Indians. They have 18 seats to the Nationalists' nearly 130. New elections are not scheduled until 1989, and if elections were held now the best estimates are that the Conservatives would merely hold their own or win just a few more seats. The fear of the right is a chimera.

White opinion has been moving much more rapidly toward multiracialism than toward a last stand for apartheid. A government-funded sample survey, conducted over the last several years by the Human Sciences Research Council, found more than two-thirds of all white respondents in favor of equal rights for all racial groups and more whites in favor of multiracial government than against it. In a thoughtful and carefully prepared report, the HSRC Investigation into Intergroup Relations concluded earlier this year that apartheid had reached a dead end, that discrimination should be abolished, and that what is required is the establishment of "public institutions that are worthy of trust and acceptance." The majority of the committee that produced the unanimous report consisted neither of opposition people nor of the same English-speakers who have been knocking apartheid for decades, but rather of respected Afrikaner intellectuals, some of them very conservative.

The report was no aberration. At the conference called to discuss it, some Afrikaner academics proposed resolutions "that ethnicity or race cannot be the basis for future political arrangements in South Africa," and others deplored "institutionalized racism." In the ranks of educated Afrikaners, the old regime of race relations has lost its legitimacy.

SIMILAR sentiments have penetrated the ruling National Party, which has recently held congresses in all the provinces. Most important and revealing was the Transvaal congress. Embracing Pretoria and Johannesburg, the Transvaal contains nearly half of the white population of the country. The Conservative Party is strong in the northern Transvaal, one of the most conservative areas, and the defection of some former Nationalists to the Conservatives in that region has liberalized the overall complexion of the Transvaal National Party.

Forces for change were visible at the Transvaal congress. The government was urged to abolish all discrimination and "get to the negotiation process." A delegate from a generally conservative mining district implored the leadership to deal with individual members of the ANC and UDF, if the government would not deal formally with the ANC itself.

TWO WEEKS LATER, at the Cape provincial party congress, the leadership was asked to repeal the Group Areas Act, a matter previously regarded as beyond debate. Resolutions of such bodies as the Artisans Staff Association of the South African Transport Services—people with much to lose if apartheid goes—have called upon the government to sit down with the black leadership now. As a result of the turmoil of the last year or so, the white community and the National Party are ahead of their leadership.

Government policy over the past several months has consisted of promises to drop or to negotiate nearly everything in apartheid that does not touch segregated living and education or political power. And all of this has been done ad hoc, step by step. When it comes to group areas, the regime has dug in its heels. On the central question of political power, the leadership has said repeatedly that it wants negotiations and participation at all levels but that this cannot include one person-one vote.

There is not likely to be much change in this line over the short term. The Cabinet is led by people who created apartheid. President Botha began his political career before 1948. The sort of change that is required will not come easily to the inner circle, and Afrikaners, however deeply they may feel, have no real tradition of changing leaders in midstream.

It is true that the domestic and international crisis that has faced the regime in recent months has hardly given it a chance to think seriously about what it is doing. Immobility has been apparent in long-term planning, partly because the regime has been trying to put out fires and partly because the leadership has had trouble shaking old ways of thinking.

Fundamental changes have been promised, but at the moment there is simply no basis for a settlement. The government fears universal suffrage would swamp the white minority. So, while it talks repeatedly of African political participation, it always comes back to "group interests and group protection." The best that could be expected from this line of thinking would be a fourth chamber for blacks (even this is not conceded yet), devolution of local control over community affairs, a wide measure of ethnic and racial autonomy, and a white minority veto at the center. By themselves, these are not promising avenues for effective change.

Proposals based explicitly on ethnic or racial interests are already rejected out of hand by the UDF. All "compartments" of this kind, says a UDF leader, are unacceptable. In the words of another, "we don't want a racial society; we want a nonracial one." Among the arrangements foreclosed by the UDF ideology is federalism, and for quite understandable, if not necessarily correct, reasons. The

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homelands have made federalism a dirty word among educated urban blacks. What they want is an undivided South Africa and protection for individual rights only. "Can't we just treat people as people?" is the common refrain. Needless to say, whites, Indians, many rural blacks, and black leaders with ethnic bases are likely to have a different view of federalism and minority protection.

On one point—unfortunately—there is a profound measure of agreement between the government and the UDF. When both think of one person-one vote, they think of the British system of plurality election in single-member territorial constituencies. UDF people tend to think of this as the most straightforward and democratic system of election—they equate this peculiar Anglo-Saxon fixation with the whole principle of majority rule. The regime, too, equates this system with majority rule—that is, with black majority rule, which it rejects. It therefore assumes that one person-one vote is out of the question.

There is by now more than enough experience of ethnic and racial conflict worldwide to forecast what would happen if the British electoral system were adopted in South Africa. Before long, political parties would probably divide cleanly along racial lines. There would then be domination of whites by blacks, provided the army stood aside, and at a later point there would be a sorting out among the black groups. Not only the future of whites, but the future of democracy under such a system, would be very much in doubt. Although whites have taught the lessons of domination in South Africa, their fears are understandable, even well-founded.

WHAT hardly anyone in South Africa seems aware of is that there are other equally or more democratic ways to run one person-one vote elections. As the Nigerians recognized some years ago, the British electoral and parliamentary system is conducive to majority domination on an ethnic party basis and has not served multi-ethnic societies in Africa at all well. Their experience is worthy of close study, but most South Africans do not seem disposed to understand this.

In the best of circumstances, it will be a matter of very good luck if universal suffrage in a severely divided society like South Africa can function in a democratic framework. But there are political arrangements that can help make the maintenance of a multi-ethnic democracy much more likely. The electoral system will be a key institution, because it helps determine how many parties form, whether they represent one or more ethnic groups, and especially whether they have incentives to behave moderately and coalesce with parties representing other ethnic groups.

What South Africa should aim for is a good deal of fluidity in party alignments and not the clear-cut government and opposition that the British model fosters. Various models of list system proportional representation are available. Probably more apt for South African circumstances is a system of alternative voting, in which voters list candidates in order of preference in multimember constituencies. This is a system conducive to lasting interethnic coalitions and to moderation of divisive ethnic issues. Few people are thinking seriously about such issues now, although they are really life-and-death issues, and it is by no means too early to get to work on them.

The illusions on both sides will be hard to dispel. If white leadership thinks it can settle on the basis of less than universal suffrage, it is fooling itself. Surveys of black opinion show an acute sense of political deprivation. Similarly, it will be difficult to persuade the UDF of the utility of unfamiliar electoral systems or political arrangements. The new Indian and Coloured chambers have given blacks an unpleasant taste of white electoral manipulation. That taste will impair their perceptions of even far more democratic proposals for a good long time. The government's long-standing emphasis on race has tainted even those electoral and territorial measures that stand the best chance of providing genuine majority rule and minority protection. This, as much as the violence, is the tragedy of South Africa. It is directly traceable to apartheid.

THE VIOLENCE will probably continue. Not only is there no substantive basis for agreement at the moment, but neither side feels particularly vulnerable yet. The UDF believes it has the government on the run. The government, in turn, has vast coercive resources it has not yet used. Some 700 people have been killed in the last 15 months or so. Yet, in their own perverse ways, both the rioters and the authorities have exercised a certain restraint. A few bombs have been set off in post office vehicles and department stores, a few stones and firebombs have been thrown in white areas, and a couple of cars have been ambushed. But, for the most part, violence against whites has been conspicuously absent. Likewise, the police and army have generally not used live ammunition, but relied on tear gas, rubber bullets, and birdshot. There is, unfortunately, room on both sides for escalation.

Moreover, black opinion has reached the point where it provides support for violence. Recent surveys report that significant numbers of blacks think violence is an appropriate means to political equality.

Even if both sides felt under great pressure to reach a settlement, there would be further obstacles. In the multiracial UDF, there is a strong strand of exclusive black nationalism. "We are the indigenous people of this country," claims a black UDF leader. "We are prepared to compromise with the people who colonized it, but we want to share in the gold and in the decision-making." All over the world, claims to indigenousness have been inhospitable to interethnic compromise, and if this one becomes powerful, the whites, who have been in South Africa for 300 years, may indeed resist. Since the government has not yet resolved to move beyond incremental reform, since the UDF has not yet absorbed its successes, and since neither side has begun to plan seriously for an enduring multi-ethnic society, more blood is likely to flow before real hope comes to South Africa. □

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

The Past in the Present

So far, there are two Kate Nelligans. On the New York stage she has appeared in *Plenty*, *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, and a piece about Virginia Woolf, in each of which she gave differently strong, complete, commanding performances. Before and between those plays she has made films: a spy thriller, a heart-tugger about a kidnapped child,

Eleni
(Warner Bros.)

Dreamchild
(Universal)

and now *Eleni*, in all of which she disappoints. Following Nelligan's career is like a roller-coaster ride. Certainly her stage roles—even the pastiche of Woolf writings—were incomparably better than her first two film roles; I hoped that the title role in *Eleni* would give her a chance to come near the level of her theater work. As a Greek peasant woman, she is somewhat better than in the earlier pictures, but her performance doesn't have what her theater work has: the thrilling combination of achievement and promise.

Eleni was made from the book by Nicholas Gage, a former reporter for *The New York Times* who was born in Greece and lived there until he was nine. When his newspaper assigned him to Athens, he used the chance to search for the murderers of his mother, Eleni. She had been unable to escape with her children when their village was seized by Communist guerrillas in the late 1940s. (The location shooting for this film was done in Spain—not in Greece, for obvious reasons.) The children eventually joined their father, who was waiting for his family in America. Eleni was arrested by the guerrillas and, after a rigged trial, was executed.

I haven't read the book, but the facts in themselves are stark. So I was surprised to see that, even with Gage as coproducer of the film, Steve Tesich was allowed to bloat the screenplay with dialogue of depressing pomposity and heroic platitude—as in the most banal Hollywood anti-Nazi films just before and during World War II. I was less surprised by the injected visual dynamics of Peter Yates's direction, a habit that Yates has not yet been able to kick.

John Malkovich plays Gage, and he too provides unpleasant surprise. He was delicately alert as the blind man in *Places in the Heart*, trenchant as the photographer in *The Killing Fields*. Although his Biff on stage and in the TV film of *Death of a Salesman* warned that he is capable of errant acting, I was dismayed by his egotistically offhand performance here. He concentrates on "being" instead of acting, with naturalistic affectations that I haven't seen since the early days of the Actors Studio. If an actor is going to be deliberately graceless and oblique, to strive for ominous quiet, he had better have the gifts of a Brando to support that approach. Not much sign of them yet in Malkovich.

The vogue of Linda Hunt continues. She can appeal, as in *The Bostonians*, where her small size was irrelevant and her finishing-school accent was apt. But those matters were silly in the silly *Silverado* and are worse than that in *Eleni*, where Hunt is cast as a sturdy peasant woman with grown children.

Still, the central flaw, because Eleni is the center of the film, is Nelligan's performance. Concede that the sound track is a handicap. Sound tracks are very often post-recorded, but they don't usually sound so. In *Eleni* we're aware of it, particularly in the long flashbacks during which Gage remembers or hears about his mother. Concede that heavy clichés of utterance and response were loaded on Nelligan. She still misses the truth of the woman she is playing. Frequently a good actor can grasp at least some of the truth that a script lacks. (For some reason, the first example that springs to mind is Paul Newman in *Exodus*.) Nelligan doesn't touch it here. She doesn't seem to have the confidence in herself, in her power over us, that she has on stage. It's almost as if she knows that she doesn't have the ultimate control of her performance—because of camera and editor—that she has in the theater. Perhaps the trouble is as simple as the fact that she hasn't yet found a good enough screenplay or a film director whom she trusts completely. In any case, there are so far two Nelligans. The screen Nelligan is a thin twin of the other.

Eleni has two themes. First, the male ego of Gage—his concentration on his quest with complete disregard of his wife's wishes—is breached by his humbling experience in Greece. Second, he learns—to no one's surprise—that time can alter justice, the justness of justice. At the end of the film, 30 years after the murder, Gage knocks at the apartment door of the murderer. We can surmise that the door is going to be opened by a child. It's a little girl, daughter of the killer's relatively recent marriage. Gage cannot bring himself to use the pistol he has brought with him. In many cases,

FILMS WORTH SEEING

After Hours. Martin Scorsese's macabre interpretation of a New York yuppie's comic nighttime adventures in a Soho netherworld. (Reviewed 10/14/85)

Plenty. David Hare has stretched his taut play into a star-vehicle movie; Meryl Streep is not in top form as an Englishwoman suffering postwar letdown; but much of the dialogue still cuts and John Gielgud is brilliant. (9/30/85)

Shoah. The word is Hebrew for "holocaust." A nine-and-a-half hour documentary, shown in two parts. Interviews, woven skillfully, with witnesses of the Final Solution—survivors, bystanders, German participants. *No footage that you have seen*; every moment was shot after 1976. Claude Lanzmann, the Frenchman who made the film—ten years' work in 14 countries—has contributed gravely, importantly, to history. (10/28/85)

SK

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statutes of limitation are something other than legal.

Someone discovered an interesting posthumous fact about Lewis Carroll and mistakenly thought it was the nub of a film. Hence *Dreamchild*. In 1932 an 80-year-old Englishwoman named Alice Hargreaves came to New York. Seventy years earlier, as Alice Liddell, she had been the child to whom Lewis Carroll told—for whom he wrote—*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Mrs. Hargreaves had been invited here by Columbia University to receive an honorary degree in the course of a celebration of Carroll's centenary. So this thoroughly Victorian lady made her first trip to America.

Patently there's a poignant wryness here—the idyllic Victorian child now an old lady in a noisy metropolis—but where's the narrative, the drama? It had to be invented. Dennis Potter, who wrote the screenplay and whose originating idea it may have been, has had to pad the minute original fact. Perhaps there's also some fact in the additions, but they still seem like padding. Mrs. Hargreaves, a woman of outmoded proprieties, is accompanied by a young female companion, repressed and bullied, who falls in love with a brash New York reporter. He reciprocates; but he also maneuvers Mrs. Hargreaves into making radio commercials, on which he gets a commission, and the girl thinks he doesn't really love her, he's only using her, and so on, until the 100 minutes are filled. The most striking passages by far are the flashbacks in which we see Carroll—the Reverend Charles Dodgson, of course—with the child Alice and her family; and there are some odd reenactments of scenes from the book. The film's one justifying moment comes near the close. On the platform at Columbia, after reading her speech, the old woman has a flash of insight into Carroll's abashed pedophiliac love for her 70 years before and is able to think of it now with tenderness.

Mrs. Hargreaves is played by that dependably refined actress Coral Browne, whose anachronistic decorum rings absolutely true. Her ten-year-old self is a nice ten-year-old named Amelia Shankley. But honors go—yes, again!—to Ian Holm as Carroll-Dodgson. How subtly he tells us of his adoration, his pained awareness that it is grotesque, that he can reach Alice, remain with her, only with his verses and tale-telling.

In the *Alice* scenes we see the Gryphon and the March Hare and the Mad Hatter and the Caterpillar wondrously recreated by Jim Henson's Creature Shop (the Muppet people). It was a good touch to make the Tenniel figures older and somewhat threatening, especially when, in these dream moments, they are confronted by the old-woman Alice in place of her younger self.

Gavin Millar, an Englishman who is known as an editor and writer on editing, directed unobtrusively, sympathetically. But neither he nor the good actors nor the extraordinary Henson creatures can give *Dreamchild* sufficient reason for being.

Renoir at the mercy of the megashow.

Is Art Worth It?

By John Updike

BOSTON'S publicity drums have been throbbing for months in anticipation of this fall's Renoir show at the Museum of Fine Arts. An article in the August 20 *Boston Globe* portrayed William Murphy, "director of operations," standing "hunched over a blueprint with red and green lines marking viewing paths and guard stations snaking through the galleries." "Publicity officer" Christopher Bowden was quoted as crowing, "There'll be pictures, Renoir posters, Renoir books. Renoir T-shirts and sweatshirts. Renoir buttons." Thirty-six thousand five-dollar tickets had already been sold as of the first week of August; half a million people were expected; staff members were close to buckling under the immense pressure from friends and relatives for Renoir-oriented favors; shuttle buses from Copley Square and crowd-counting photoelectric cells were in the works. The invasion of Grenada hadn't warranted more logistics than this "megashow." Museum "officials," with a nostalgic backward glance to the "New World" exhibit of two years ago, when the weight of the crowds more than once broke the escalators, reassured the obviously alarmed reporter that "high-interest shows such as Renoir are necessary . . . to boost attendance and broaden the museum's base."

My wife and I, as museum members, received frequent bulletins as to the show's grandeur and the prodigious difficulties bound to assail those who attempted to see it. Important-looking polychrome tickets by Ticketron arrived in the mail, assigning us a precise admission time on one of the members' days, before the universal onrush. We were warned that the parking around the museum and in its newish, I. M. Pei-designed parking lot would be impossible, and so it proved. Traffic on Huntington Avenue slowed to a honking, snarling crawl as we neared the citadel of art. Panicked lest we miss our appointed hour and be relegated to a dark afternoon in remotest December, we found an illegal spot in some mazy casbah off the Fenway and scurried pell-mell through the thickening mobs.

Inside the formerly stately museum, hullabaloo had attained a carnival pitch; the crush at the cloakroom merged indistinguishably with the crush at the admission counter. Upstairs, at the head of the not-as-yet-broken escalator, two infinite parallel lines had formed: one for the 12:30 people, and one for the one o'clocks, which included us. Things were running, rumor had it, 45 minutes late. My mind fled back to the *Globe* article, and director of operations Murphy's guarded estimate: "We'll set an arbitrary level of 700 people at a time. As long as the average stay isn't over an hour, we're O.K." Evidently, the individual viewing time for the 97 assembled paintings was exceeding the projected 37 seconds each.

Our line, though long and unmoving, was good-tempered. We were,

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John Updike's latest book is *Facing Nature* (Knopf).

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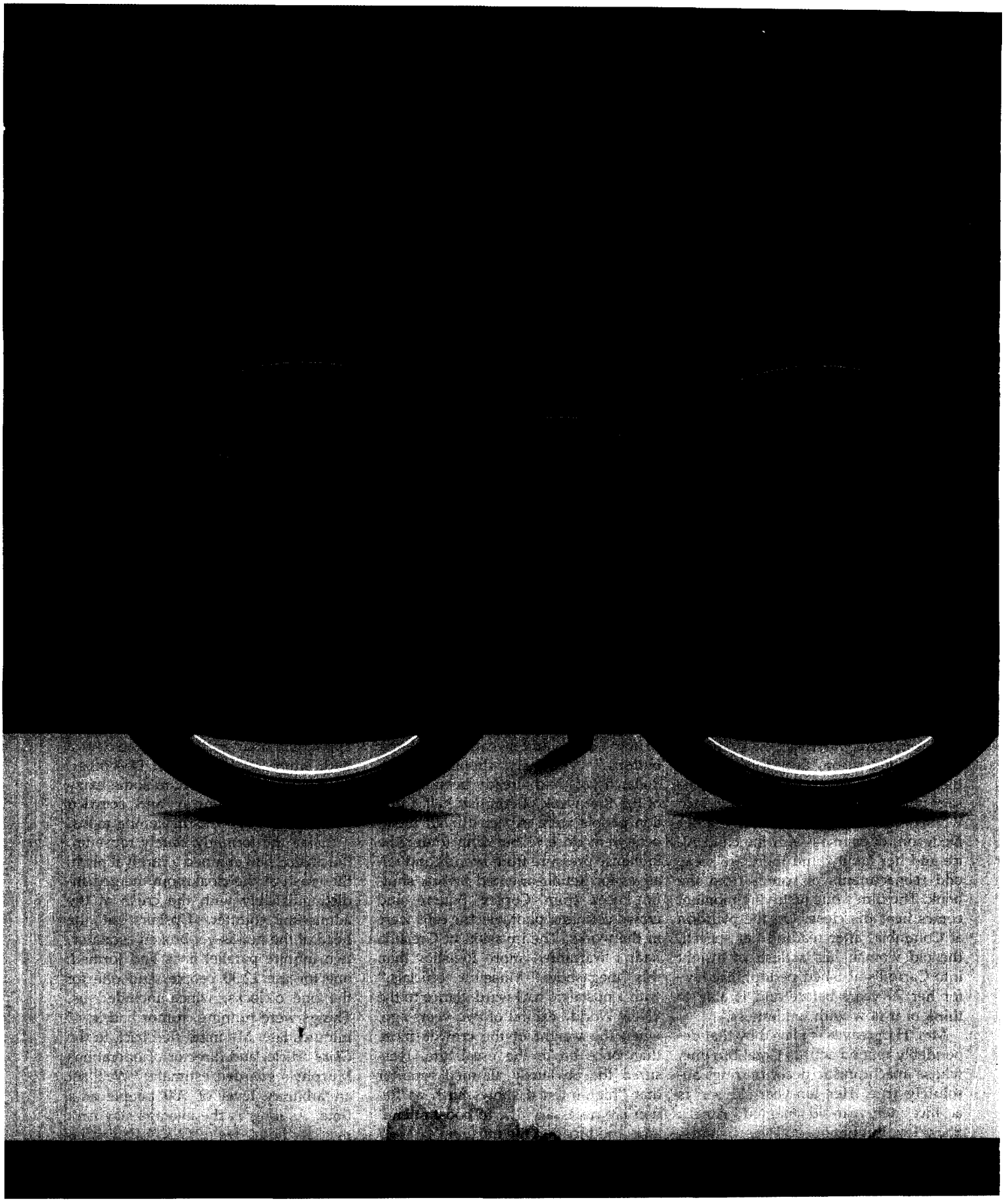

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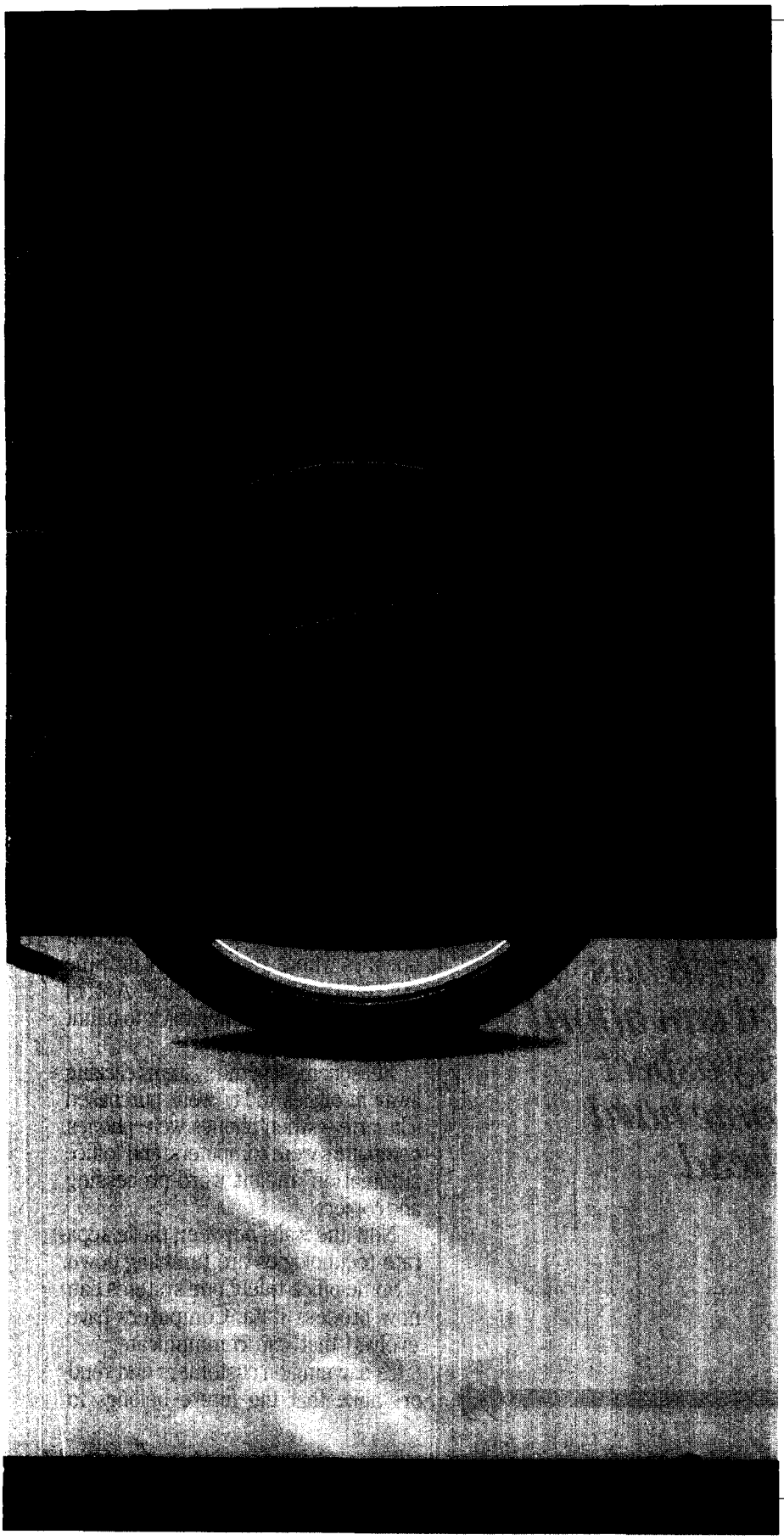

OFFICE AUTOMATION: HOW MUCH IS TOO MUCH?

Sometime last year American business crossed a technological Rubicon. For the first time in our history, capital investment per office worker exceeded that per factory hand.

Like it or not, information has finally surpassed material goods as our basic resource.

Walter Wriston, ex-Citicorp chief, likens information to a new form of capital, one that is arguably "more critical to the future of the American economy than money capital."

Every day brings news of faster, smaller, more capable devices to serve the 70% of us who now work with this new form of capital.

But while the trend spotters on

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their mountaintops cheer this "Second Industrial Revolution," the view from the front lines is not so rosy.

Too often, new devices are an uneasy fit with their sister machines of just a year ago. Too often, systems intended to simplify office life have the opposite effect. Grouses one manager: "The more business machines we buy, the more we seem to need."

Change is rampant. The stakes are high. Confusion is king.

◇

RASCALS. The best way to make sense of all this technology may be to ignore the whole business for a week or so and think about how your office works instead.

Who uses what kind of information? Where does it come from? What do they do with it?

No company on earth has pockets so deep that it can afford to automate every aspect of its business. Some hard choices lie ahead.

Item: In a typical office, 75% of the salary dollars go to managers and professionals. The system that spares these expensive rascals from a morning meeting or an hour of returning phone calls may be a better investment than one that does a whole day's work for someone else.

Item: The lion's share of time spent in any office is spent *communicating:* listening, talking, chasing down stray facts, dealing with mail.

Were you to keep a log, you'd be appalled by how little time you have for actually producing "work." (Par for senior executives: about 15%.)

To leverage time, look for ways to *move* information more efficiently.

A desktop computer can perform in minutes the spreadsheet analyses that used to gobble hours. But how much is gained if the figures still walk from office to office in a mail cart?

Item: Streamlining the internal workings of your office may be less profitable than automating ties with customers or suppliers.

Japanese style "just in time" deliveries from suppliers are helping U.S. automakers slash inventory costs. Computerized flight information systems have given some airlines a strategic advantage with travel agents.

No company succeeds alone.

◇

BALANCE. Complicating the question of where your systems dollar is best spent is where you spent it last time out. And the time before that. A lot of past choices are coming back to haunt today's manager.

Reason: most of the systems clicking away in offices today were purchased a la carte – when phones were phones, computers were computers, and "office automation" meant word processing and copiers.

Now the walls between these separate technologies are tumbling down.

Some office telephone systems can now process data. Computers have evolved that can communicate.

It's dawning on customers and vendors alike that the future belongs to

"No company on earth has pockets so deep that it can afford to automate every aspect of its business. Some hard choices lie ahead."

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Today's customer must strike a balance between making the most of what's on hand and fighting like crazy to keep next year's options open.

the *integrated* business system.

Today's customer must strike a balance between making the most of what's on hand and fighting like crazy to keep next year's options open.

◇

MISSING LINKS. Between today's a la carte systems and the office-wide, integrated everything of tomorrow is . . . what?

For many companies, the missing links are *networks.* By permitting different kinds of computers and other devices to share information, networks can pull today's stand-alone business machines into organized "islands" of automation.

Since these islands themselves can be networked together, users can widen the scope of automation in an organization pretty much at will.

Some companies have the backbone of an *office-wide* network already in place. Today's digital telephone switching systems (PBXs) convert speech into the same "bits" and "bytes" that computers use.

This means that many an existing telephone network can double as a highway for business data — and that "office automation" need have no geographic limits.

A plug for the home team: Every vendor does some things better than the other guys. While communications and data networks are drawing-board doodles in some shops, they are bread and butter items at AT&T.

It may be AT&T's greatest strength that we can integrate new and existing systems whether we provide *all* of those systems, or *some* of those systems, or the bridges between them.

◇

SUCCESS. Like the first Industrial Revolution, this one will lift some companies and confound others.

Those without a coherent plan to manage information in *all* its forms — the spoken word, thoughts on paper, images, and computer data—will be at a disadvantage.

In the long run, your success with office automation will have less to do with whose machines you buy — or how many — than with how freely information travels among them. It is the relationships you set up *between* the machines, not the devices themselves, that will tell the tale.

P.S. Much of this message was drawn from *The Integration Puzzle,* a two-day seminar offered by AT&T's Institute for Communications and Information Management. For further information or for a catalogue of AT&T Seminars in eight cities, please telephone 1 800 247-1212.

Or write Mr. Dale Hegstrom, AT&T Information Systems, P.O. Box 1405, Morristown, NJ 07960-1405.

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The right choice.

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after all, museum members—tiny art patrons. Half of the males looked like George Bush at varying points in his evolution, wearing end-of-summer suits and that blinking, stooping air of wry martyrdom with which Boston-area men escort their wives to cultural events; and the other half looked like Allen Ginsberg at about the time he wrote "Howl." There seemed to be, perhaps in response to Renoir's love of young and glowing flesh, a remarkable number of babies, harnessed to their parents by a well-stitched wealth of slings, knapsacks, and neo-papooses. Rain beat gently on the skylights as we shuffled our way, with nary a sideways glance, through the dim chambers of Tibetan art, where three-eyed godlings danced in eternal fire. "So I called the contractor the day before the hurricane," the woman ahead of me was telling her companion, "and *asked* him if these barrels of tar should be left out on the roof that way, and he told me—you know how they talk—'Lady, absolutely not to worry.' Well, just after the big oak lost its branch, I noticed these black spots on the lawn. . . ."

LESS THAN an hour behind schedule, we were admitted to the fulgent galleries where the show hung. It is no small compliment to Renoir's vitality to say that he wasn't trampled underfoot. The paintings made their splashes, in their ornate old plaster frames, on the blue-gray wall, and some were indeed splendid. But such a concentration, after such hoopla, made it clearer than it should have been that Renoir does not quite rank with the heroic masters of early modern painting—specifically, with his friends Monet and Cézanne. Compared with either, he didn't look hard enough. He saw what he wanted to see, and turned it as he aged into an inward vision, a mythology. The shimmering, breezy outdoors of Impressionism gradually grows furry and comes indoors and in the end becomes a kind of wallpaper, a green and blue background scrubbed in behind nudes painted in quite another style, a style of enameled pallor. The brush strokes turn greasier, the colors rawer, the drawing vaguer. In the end the people all look Mexican, and a lumpy muralism reminds us that Renoir began to paint as a decorator of porcelain, fans, blinds, and walls. Old artists are entitled to caricature themselves, but—though his huge pottery women are said to have inspired Picasso in one of his phases—Renoir's final turn is less usefully, less *attentively* extreme than Monet's virtually abstract water lilies or Cézanne's sketchy, scattered watercolors, which paved the way for Cubism.

SUCH IS the sour mood of unappreciation induced by a megashow. Poor Renoir, he didn't ask for this. Placed in the Impressionist/Postimpressionist galleries of a major museum, a half-dozen canvases by him speak with their own charming accent and glow by their own tender light. But the numerous paintings in Boston, dutifully consumed by the eyeball as one shuffles past in a slow pedestrian choo-choo, begin to deposit on the retina an accumulated taste of artificial sweetener. Somewhere between the spanking fresh outdoor studies of the 1870s and the baby-pale nudes of the next decade, Renoir's coloring becomes artificial—his greens harder and bluer than vegetation, his skin tones devoid of real shadow, a sickly ocher haunting his outdoors and indoors. The faces of his females develop their characteristic look, of coal-dark eyes burning in milk-white faces. The little *Gypsy Girl* of 1879 is one of the last portraits that give us the sensation of an individual presence—the frizzy body of reddish hair, the curiously tentative, blurred expression of the mouth. Her figure and clothes, too, are one with the outdoor background, within a palpable atmosphere. In the two spectacular *Blonde Bathers* of 1881 and 1882, atmosphere has been sacrificed to a sensual monumentality, and the blue-soaked background is mostly backdrop—gold-tinged crags and cardboard sea fetched from a book of fairy tales for our plump mermaids. Aline Charigot, the dressmaker who eventually became Madame Renoir, said that she was still very thin when, at the age of 22, on a trip to Italy, she posed thus for her lover: Renoir's homage put the fat into infatuation, and also placed a wedding ring on her left hand, nine years before they actually married. The first *Blonde Bather* was painted from life, and the second from the first; the edges have become sharper and less plausible, the blue of the sea and the red of her hair have unreally intensified, and her dazzlingly pale flesh, which in the first version carried some modeling shadows of complementary color, in the second is baldly shadowed with pink. We are on the verge here of poster art.

Onions and the blossoming trees of *The Seine at Chatou*, both from 1881, show that Renoir could still paint what was before him, in his feathery, flicking strokes. The kind of purely visual excitement, however, that could turn a bit of Algerian landscape (1881) into a florid storm of tans and browns and murky dabs soon yields to the postcard tints of *Landscape near Menton* (1883), the stately anecdotes of the three tall dancing couples of 1882-3, and his stilted attempts, in the quest for an art that would give back heroic dignity to the human figure, to imitate the drier, paler, more composed look of quattrocento frescoes. His great mock-fresco is the large *Bathers* (1887), to be found in the Philadelphia Museum of Art; Boston displays from this period the very stiff and (except for the left-hand child) dull portrait of the Wargemont children, one of the many amiable society portraits the painter executed. He was, like Velázquez and Sargent, a student of children, of their little plump, blurred, half-asleep faces. The two nude *Bathers* of 1892 and 1895 rather shockingly have, atop their lush womanly bodies, the heads of little girls; the *Blonde Bathers* from the early 1880s, in their idealized pink-white roundnesses, impose regression on the entire body: Venus as baby. The peaceable Renoir moment is a kind of naptime; his dancing couples drowse in one another's arms, and his outdoor cafés exist without clatter or the possibility of conflict. He repeatedly insisted that he painted for pleasure alone: "For me a picture . . . should be something likeable, joyous and pretty—yes, pretty. There are enough ugly things in life for us not to add to them."

FROM HIS ART we might imagine him a plump, rosy, placid man, but in fact he was bony-faced, nervous, reactionary, and restless. He changed residences often and kept experimenting with the styles of other painters. Having helped liberate painting into the open air, he itched to put it back in the museum, and pondered Ingres and painted Judgments of Paris. The most beautiful products of his last decade are the sculptures, fashioned by other hands but infused with his spirit, his search for a new classicism. The finest of these is *Venus Victorious*; she holds the apple Paris has awarded her: Eve redeemed. Among his peers Renoir was

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the great image-maker; only van Gogh, a decade younger, is his equal in this respect. The childlike, supernatural bathers; the stunning blacks and whites of *La Loge* (present in the catalog but confined to the Courtauld Institute in London); the gracile young women with their heads bent together over piano lessons; Aline nursing; the couple of *Dance at Bougival*, he with his red beard and yellow hat and she with her red bonnet and averted glance (used as the show's motif, on brochures, buttons, shopping bags): these images take fond hold of the mind, and make Renoir the people's Impressionist, and a natural for a megashow. But image-making, though an art that draws upon our deep instincts and desires, is not quite the same as painting, and one traverses the 97 canvases feeling not often enough enchanted by feats of rendering and structure like:

Portrait of Mademoiselle Romaine Lacaux (1864)—prim, opalescent, *pale*-eyed; apprentice work of a high order;

Flowers in a vase (c. 1869)—if there was a flower Renoir was born to paint, it was the chrysanthemum;

The promenade (1870)—painted heavily, yet alive with light and forest atmospherics;

The Seine at Argenteuil (1874)—like Monet, all eye and no false pleasantry;

Nude in the sunlight (1875)—no clay goddess, a real faun-nymph, almost sinister in the dapple;

The swing (1876)—on the edge of healthy Bonnard-like violence; the blue bows on the dress seem negative images of the dabs of sunlight; one of the few paintings that could be called witty; another is

Young woman reading an illustrated journal (c. 1880-1)—not only is reading and rendering an open magazine over the model's shoulder a witty thing to do, but the composition forms a sandwich of monochromes that hover like Rothko's;

Landscape at Wargemont (1879)—wonderfully weird, a winding road as a big pink worm; landscape on the verge of abstraction;

Sleeping girl (1880)—that cat! that slipped strap and exposed white shoulder! an anecdotal painting we can forgive;

Dance at Bougival (1882-3)—of course; in the Boston museum's own collection, like a number of the best; I especially admired, on this viewing, the cigarette butts and matches in the foreground;

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The child at the breast (1886)—chalky, but gives us a detailed underside of a male baby, if we care; and

Portrait of Madame Renoir with Bob (c. 1910)—gives us the same buxom Aline, formerly dressmaker and artist's model, grown gray and shrewd, with a most winningly boneless puppy in her shapeless yellow lap.

The line at the souvenir shop was the worst yet, and the woman behind me began to whimper that she was going to faint. Yet, with the grim fortitude that made New England rocky, we hung in there with our postcards and Renoir notepaper and $19.95 catalogs, and purchased. I didn't see anybody buying any of the 50-cent buttons, though. As my wife and I approached the spot where we had left our car, I saw on its windshield a lyrical dab of a color Renoir never used—Day-Glo orange, the color of a Boston parking ticket.

Totalitarianism, apartheid, and the responsibility of the writer.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN WASTELAND

BY BREYTEN BREYTENBACH

WHAT IS the true nature of the South African state? I propose two series of answers. Talking of South Africa as a reality, one could say that it is a fairly developed industrial state, the economic giant of the region—using, for instance, 60 percent of all the electricity generated on the continent. That it is self-sufficient, and endowed with excessive natural riches, with space enough for all, and room for expansion. That it is the granary of the subcontinent. That it is a land laid waste by recurrent droughts and erosion and mismanagement, its arable surfaces diminishing yearly. That it is a Third World country, showing all the archaic features of a feudal society, with the vast majority of its citizens living or dying under the breadline. That it is a country made up of a rich patchwork of cultures, but due to acculturation, centuries of mixing, and a long exposure to American clichés, exhibiting a distinctly recognizable South African culture, making it different from Zimbabwe and Mozambique. That it is a country where differences are enforced and exploited and rewarded by the privileges of discrimination. That it is a country cut off from the world, where thinking and political activity are smothered. That it is a depoliticized wasteland, where the mind is stultified by imported dogmas ill-equipped to provide solutions to local discrepancies—neo-Nazism and Stalinism, to name but two. That it is a country rich in theoretical innovation, with minds stretching to provide sense-making interpretations of its peculiar social realities, finding novel forms of political expression, inventive structures. That it is a country of the devil, of alcoholism, of despair, of heart ailments, of hereditary high blood pressure, of obesity, of hard-heartedness, of wasted bones, of apathy, of crusted-over insensitivity, of daily violence and nightly murder. That it is a country, also, of tenderness and hope and generosity and hospitality, where the believers are truly involved in the burning issues scorching the communities. That it is a place where you find Africa's foremost military force consisting of white professionals and conscripts and black volunteers, capable of both orthodox and irregular forms of warfare, ready to strike fast and far beyond its borders; a land where the army, made up of jittery young whites, brainwashed, taking to drugs, and brutal black flunkies, is employed in the squashing of internal uprisings—an occupation force. That it is a land of rain and wind and dust; of storms and isolation; a land crisscrossed by borders; a land of death and regeneration; of death mentality, suicide mentality; of border paranoia, revolutionary élan.

My second group of answers would touch upon the world of difference between pretensions and reality, upon the world of madness, of calculated madness, of sublimated madness. Those in power in Pretoria claim that, as the arbiters of peace and progress, they are carrying the illuminating force of Western civilization into the heathen darkness, that they are God's lonely soldiers battling against communism and barbarism. Many of them even believe it. Some powerful individuals abroad do too, or pretend to. Those in power in Pretoria fully insist that they are the only ones who can assure Western capitalist investment in the subcontinent. In the process of so pretending, they are, inter alia, corrupting the power brokers of the West—often, alas, so easily corruptible. They are also raping Africa; but that would seem to be by the way, as the West closes a complacent eye and leers tolerantly at those goings-on as just healthy sexual romping. They say that they are uplifting the natives, near and far. They can even be heard to boast that they know and understand Africa and the Africans.

The truth? Communism has found, objectively, a recruiting agent in the South African regime, embodying boldly the basest manifestations of capitalist colonialism. The rulers are destabilizing and ruining the region, and mortally humiliating the entire continent. They are destroying the credibility and the viability of Western values. They are endangering, in the long run, whatever strategic and financial interests the West may have in the area. They cannot know the Africans, or even themselves.

Breyten Breytenbach is the author most recently of *The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux). He was arrested in South Africa in 1975 and later charged with terrorism. Sentenced to nine years in prison, he served seven and was released in 1982, thanks to an intervention by President Mitterrand. He now lives in Paris.

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How can the master ever understand the slave? Control and repression are not tools of perception.

THE veritable nature of the South African state is that it is totalitarian. A totalitarian system is found, I think, where a single party expressed in a structure of power, usually operating on behalf of some homogeneous ideology, rules the state to the exclusion, or more likely the repression, of any valid alternative. The dominant establishment may well range from a centralized democracy to a seemingly democratic multiparty setup; in certain instances dissent may be allowed, and opposition tolerated, but only to maintain the appearance of tolerance, or to the extent that resistance may be incorporated into the oppressive system, to make it stronger by rendering it more flexible.

And since a totalitarian system is always run by a minority, military and police methods must be used to impose the system on the majority. Repression, with its concomitants of violence and corruption, will inevitably be justified in the name of the state's supposed security, which is the highest good and ideal; the state is God's carcass inhabited by the good and the just. Arbitrary administrative measures take precedence over representational politics. The army and the police, particularly the security police and the intelligence advisers, become the mainstay of the regime. Totalitarianism promotes a police state—not necessarily because the streets will be crawling with policemen, but because treachery and informing will be the name of the game, indeed a survival technique, and because people living in such a state will camouflage their true beliefs and pretend to opinions of convenience. Finally, the power elite, more likely than not, will be organized as an occult brotherhood, or a lodge, or a league.

South African totalitarianism's claim to fame, however, lies in its constitutional, institutionalized, structural, and codified racism—covering all forms of human intercourse and enterprise: politics, economics, religion, social life, culture, sports, sex. It is unique in its alternative solutions to all the problems of cultural and economic coexistence, solutions such as camps, homelands, border industries, mass removals, classification, repression, and crisis control. It is unique in its shaping of new forms of colonialism, just when we thought that

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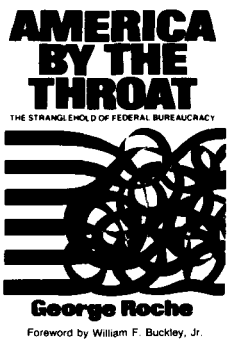

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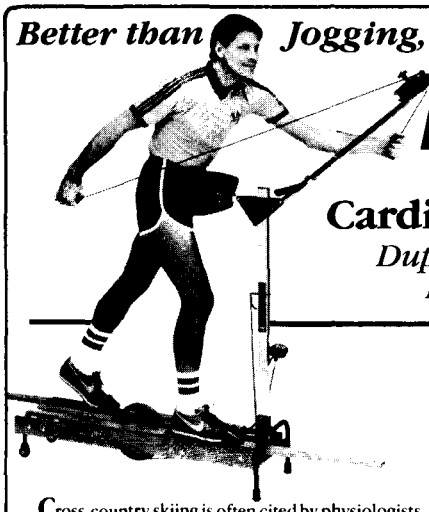

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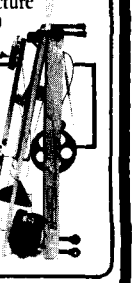

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history was at last pointing the other way. It is unique in its introduction of massive state violence against its own citizens, in a controlled enlarging of the limits of acceptable violence. It is unique in its conscious banalization of inhumanity. It is the cutting edge of a new realpolitik, expressed in the callousness to hunger and poverty and death.

What does this state aim for? To perpetuate itself; to increase the good fortune of those loyal to it, whose interest it promotes. Since it is totalitarian and expansionist, but also encircled from within and without by growing numbers of agitators, antagonists, barbarians, and others like myself, it must extend its hegemony, particularly if it wishes to preserve its privileges. And so, despite breakdowns, fuck-ups, and temporary setbacks, it moves along the suppurating lines of big apartheid, farming out the indigenous majority to manageable homelands, depriving them of their nationality as South Africans, ultimately aiming to regroup them together, with the neighboring client states or colonies, in a constellation of Southern African states with white South Africa secured by the constructive approval it gets from the United States.

DOES THE South African state evolve? Is it amenable to pressure? No, it has shown no evolution, except for an adjustment to changing circumstances, a refinement of the theoretical matrix underpinning the praxis, an introduction of some flexibility to make it more resilient, all still in terms of overall goals and basic assumptions that have not undergone even an iota of change. Nobody can tell, in fact, how it would react if it were put under real pressure; no effective pressure, apart from low-level internal resistance flaring up sporadically, has ever been brought to bear upon it.

Ideally, as things are moving now, there could come a point when the rulers of South Africa become enmeshed in the pretense of affecting structural and conceptual changes, when they unleash more momentum than they can handle. I have always maintained that it is not important to expect the racist to undergo a change of heart; he should be forced by circumstances, rather, to *pretend* that he is not a racist. Eventually the posture will come to have content. But I'm not optimistic. First, because the rulers have enough blanket control to guide events and direct them. Second, because Afrikaner consciousness is grounded in a profound willingness to self-destruct. This armors their fanaticism. The Afrikaner, with the rigid sense of insecurity of the half-breed, is culturally incapable of absorbing or translating or accommodating transformation, let alone of provoking it.

WHAT ARE THE real problems, then, the true obstacles, facing the South African state as construed and run by the white elite?

(1) Demographic pressure. They cannot breed fast enough, and a tribal survival instinct may well be blemished. Nor can they incorporate sufficient numbers of foreign whites fast enough without submerging their identity. And even if they were to succeed in making real allies of the two co-opted minorities, the Indian and the Coloured, the dike would not withstand the flood; and they have run out of minorities by now.

(2) Economic pressure. They can only safeguard their own privileges by allowing the economic growth, and ultimately the integration, of the blacks, which doctrine of course forbids; and there is not enough money to go around. A certain Dr. Frank Shostak, an economic researcher, foresees that during 1985 we shall see the price of gold slithering to somewhere between $270 and $300 an ounce; that the prime interest rate will be 35 percent, and the South African rand will not be worth much more than 25 cents, and that it may well plunge to ten cents; that there will be zero economic growth probably until 1988. (To compare, when I was in prison the gold price was reaching for $500 an ounce, and the rand used to be pegged to the dollar on a one-on-one basis. Perhaps I should have stayed in prison.)

The fat of the land is turning rancid. Economic and financial hardship will accentuate the rifts in their own ranks. The far right will become more militant, more influential. And then—resistance. For there is just no way that they can, once and for all, eradicate black political consciousness, or prevent it from evolving specifically South African forms of struggle against South African totalitarianism. Time, you may say, is black.

Who is the opposition? Ultimately, the ruling elite is confronting the South African people. I'm not for a moment attempting to deny the South Africanness, the *Africanité*, of those now ruling. I am saying, however, that the opposition, too, is patriotic, that it comes from within, in the name of the healing of the South African nation. More precisely, effective opposition more and more clearly situates itself in relation to the aims and the practices of the political avant-garde and mass organizations of South African history, foremost among them the African National Congress. In a land of crude extremes, the liberal alternative is a nonstarter, a nonadaptable transplant from more clement climes, ill-equipped to do battle with nationalism and extremism. In the final analysis, liberalism of the old-fashioned kind can but fit a more humane mask over the embittered features of the clowns running the show.

THE battle lines are thus drawn. On the one hand, the white minority, with some Coloured and Indian and minimal black support, using a fearsome repressive machinery, having a monopoly on power, strong in a favored position as caretakers for Western interests; on the other, the black majority, with some Coloured and Indian and white support, led by the ANC or by organizations hewing to the same line. What does the opposition propose? The opposition programs are vague, but there are the zero demands that cannot be negotiated: a unitary state, unconditional citizenship for all, majority government. These are the essentials. They can perhaps even be reduced to: one people, one nation. (Those words were written on the flag that covered the coffin of Steve Biko when he was carried to his grave.) Beyond that there are obviously many concerns—freedom of movement, land ownership, equality of opportunity, decent and free education, and so on. But what matters now is the quality and the lucidity of the opposition struggle—the extent to which, by their principles and their choices, the resistance organizations show the way to moral acuity and nation-building. Oppression sharpens the mind; resistance cleans it.

The opposition, of course, is not homogeneous. There are real differences of approach, though far less than the Bothas of this world would have us believe. Influential factions may be against violence, but all thinking is defined by the simple fact of the Boer having the gun, and using it. He is quite literally calling the shots. People

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may not look upon violent resistance as the decisive component of liberation, but no one expects the process to be violence-free. How do you talk to the man who has been killing hundreds of your youngsters over the last year?

There are essentially still two major resistance groupings—the "charterists" (referring to the 1955 Freedom Charter) such as the ANC and the UDF, and the Black Consciousness movements such as the Black Forum and AZAPO (Azanian People's Organization). Differences in analysis, appraisal, and approach have led to internecine community violence. In a ham-fisted way the government tried to exacerbate this. The ideological positions of the two currents are not static; they have been evolving, are partially overlapping. Black Consciousness is now perhaps more Marxist-influenced than used to be the case. . . . All of this demands a clearer exegesis than I'm capable of.

OPPOSITION? I prefer to speak of resistance. We cannot, as yet, talk of a general uprising. The situation cannot be described as either an insurrection or a revolution, although aspects of a revolution are present—such as an indigenous mind-freeing, a willingness to be self-reliant, the purging of informers, collaborators, lackeys, police spies. What we do have is the flaring up of a low-level civil war. Black resistance now is significantly different from previous eruptions (Sharpeville and after during the 1960s, Soweto in 1976), in that the locus of mobilization is inside the country; all strata of the population are involved; the backdrop is one of dire economic hardship; the people are more resolute and more desperate, and political awareness is at a much higher general level; there has been an accumulation of militant experiences; liberation is not seen to be a wave breaking over the borders; and trade unions have hardened their political role (despite the relative failure of the recent mine workers' strike).

The South African majority is painfully forging—as oppressed peoples always have had to—its own physical and ideological tools in the liberation struggle against a peculiarly South African blend of exploitation, repression, and corruption. This struggle is not necessarily well coordinated. It is unclear to what extent the ANC is present, despite its international recognition and the people's mythical identification with ANC colors and songs. One of the heartening elements, even if it can be disruptive, is the ongoing ideological debate on anything from the role of trade unions to the pros and cons of violent or nonviolent strategies to the duplicity of official United States reactions.

WHAT are the possible scenarios? Again, I don't think there is any cause for optimism. There will be blood and suffering, treachery and bestiality. Those in power will stretch their claws to the Congo. Where among the nations of the world can the political will be found to thwart them? And who in Africa, or what combination of forces, can mobilize the necessary economic and military power to prevent the implementation of their schemes? This is the first, the most gruesome, alternative. But they will be building on sand. For how long could they maintain the state of drawn-out war, beset by eternal unrest, needed to impose such a Pax Africana?

The second possibility hinges on rapid deterioration—a cave-in of the national economy and a wide-scale, well-coordinated black uprising. I don't think that is likely, either. But the ferocious commitment to the struggle of those presently fighting with bare hands, and their willingness not only to endure suffering, general unemployment, no electricity or water in the townships, but actually to sacrifice themselves, could become a decisive factor. The government is showing a willingness to use troops for internal security purposes. Now they cannot undo the escalation. They have been maneuvered into the classical trap of being an occupation force.

A third possibility I have already alluded to: that the powers would lose control over the attempts at reform and adaptation. If the politicians fail, will the army then take over? Why not? Or need it be pointed out that the military forces already, surreptitiously and then sometimes quite openly, are in command? What of the fact that we have now, in the best banana tradition, a professional soldier as minister of defense? Look at Namibia. Isn't it really only a military province? Surely the negotiations can be described as essentially a military process. Look at the way foreign policy toward Angola, Zimbabwe, Mozambique is conceived, and put into application, as acts of war.

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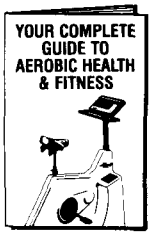

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When P. W. Botha came to power in 1978 (by what I described elsewhere as a "camouflaged coup d'état"), as the culmination of the carefully engineered "Information Scandal," which brought down J. B. Vorster and scratched from the race Botha's rival, Connie Mulder, then minister of the interior, it meant that military thinking would thenceforth largely define the future. Botha was minister of defense; he now had grouped around him a generation of Green Beret-type "interventionist" anti-guerrilla strategists. Through this ascendancy the new "pragmatic" constitutional thinking can be traced, the shift in power from Parliament or party caucus to a National Security Council can be explained, South Africa's military meddling near (and far) in Africa can be understood.

IT'S perhaps useless to speculate about a Jericho solution—that all-encompassing and purifying revolution inexplicably bringing down the walls. What can be more plausibly foreseen is that the official white opposition, the progressives, will focus on three areas of dispute: urbanization, influx-control, the nationality question. The browns in parliament will want to do away with the laws of apartheid. They are puppets who must show that they can dance without strings. The blacks will harden and diversify their total rejection and opposition. Economic or trade union action will become more important. The psychological freeing from dependency through a re-valorized consciousness will again become relevant. But they will suffer from the split between Black Consciousness and "charterists," meaning essentially the ANC-UDF.

The African National Congress will go into crisis. Deprived effectively of bases, the external headquarters now finds its primacy as the architect of a developing armed struggle threatened. Paradoxically, the ANC inside the country is growing in strength and popularity. Does this mean that the outside leadership may lose its grip on events inside? Is that perhaps one of the reasons why the ANC may now be interested in talking to the South African government?

I think that on one side the struggle will be more diversified, become more complex, and on the other side there will be repeated offensive actions launched by the whites, to shore up their recently confirmed position of regional dominance. Botha will swing through Africa. There will be regional alliances and development aid from abroad funneled through the white government. There will be the occasional military incursion alternating with economic throttle to weaken Zimbabwe and Zambia. They will play footsie with Zaire. They will ignore Tanzania, and have no reason to be reminded of the existence of Malawi, except as a feeding trough for RNM, the Mozambique rebels. They will pray that the Cubans do not leave Angola too soon, so that they may continue extrapolating their internal contradictions into an East-West conflict.

IT IS TRUE, at the same time, that many average South African whites are at the moment deeply shaken and despondent because of recent events, and the confusing signals flashed at them by the leaders; true that some conscripts seem to be reluctant, even in the name of "emergency," to be marching on the townships against the "adversary" or the "enemy" (as blacks are referred to)—but there the opposition Progressive Federal Party may suggest succor by propagating an end to conscription and a strengthening of the professional army! True, also, that many observers now consider Botha a lame-duck president. But then, incapacity, rigidity, blustering, stupidity, and any number of self-inflicted foot wounds never disqualified an Afrikaner politico. Just look, for instance, at the fine career of Louis le Grange, minister of law and order.

If you think in terms of survival and attrition, if you take into account that the government is ready, if need be, to do away with the residual vestiges of white democracy, if you believe (as government leaders do) that they are facing a flabby and, at best, hypocritical West, and a dissolute and bribe-weakened Africa ever hovering on the brink of tribal genocide—then you can see why and how they do not consider themselves seriously challenged yet. (Although they don't underestimate the Total Onslaught!) They cannot seriously be challenged from within their own ranks, since they man the only lifeboat provided for the whites.

Concerned outsiders will be well advised to remember that they are facing a South African political-military cast unrestrained by moral boundaries, profoundly (finally self-destructively) motivated by a fanaticism that cannot conceive of anything less than a monopoly of power. Their guidelines are *adapt or change*, better still, *dye or die* (and not *adapt or die*, as P. W. Botha so disingenuously averred). They will dye if they have to, but the ultimate barrier remains: for the whites, barring some exceptions, the blacks, barring some exceptions, are not human the same way they are.

So what else is new? Given the rulers' declared and illustrated resolve to use force against all comers, and given their considerable police and military power, it doesn't seem as if they have been weakened by events. Criticism leveled at them by business community spokesmen may reflect differences in priorities and degrees of anguish that are more apparent than real. To the extent that these concerns of the free marketeers tend to confuse and defuse international solidarity expressed through sanctions or divestment, it suits the regime no end. In any event, the government (I sense) expects to have turned the corner. The world is doing its worst and it isn't good enough. International queasiness is dying down, and traditional interests are being reasserted. The possibility of international orchestration leading to the political, economic, and military isolation of South Africa now seems remote. South Africa's backers (Ronald Reagan's America, Margaret Thatcher's Britain, Helmut Kohl's Germany . . .) are still stronger than the dispersed opponents.

AT THE time of this writing, in late September, it is clear that internal turmoil has not yet seriously impaired the white regime's regional aggressiveness or its capacity for exporting unrest: it is again intervening abroad in Angola, in support of UNITA. Similarly, the world abroad is probably belatedly discovering the harsh but dialectically agile adversaries so well known to South African freedom fighters. The government's response to mounting pressure from inside and outside the country has been standard: promises, doublespeak, obfuscating the real problems, one step forward and two in the kisser, shooting the messengers of ill tidings. Even blackmail and threats: it is enlightening to see a Botha wag a warning pie-stained finger at the whole world, promising dire consequences and burnt hands, in exactly the same mad way as when talking to those subjects "who

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don't know their place" or, God forbid, "who agitate!" And, ah, to see the South African government use on you, America, the well-tried repressive technique of alternating the "bad" Botha with the "good" Botha!

Changes? It is true that some of the most hoary apartheid fixtures have been modified or abolished—the law prohibiting "mixed" marriages and that declaring "mixed" sex "immoral." Many more will probably disappear from the books. They must, if the minimal support of Coloureds and Indians is to be retained. It will all be done with a great to-do—taking the padlocks off the stable doors after the horses have been shot. And not a damn essential will be altered. Unrest may die down temporarily, yes, but I don't doubt that the war will continue.

While we were all looking the other way, at apartheid, the nature of power control and the depth of Western involvement in Southern Africa were modified, consolidated, and are in the process of being revealed now as much more naked and ferocious than we ever thought.

THE SITUATION being extraordinarily complex, the writer, if he really wants to write, if he wants to hone his craft, must face the splitting of the mind, the supping with the devil, the writing in dribbles from the corner of the mouth, but also the exhilarating challenge of rising to the need. But how? We don't even speak the same meanings. If you say "man," quite innocently, in Afrikaans, you are of necessity referring to a white; the language has other derogatory terms for indicating the Other. Similarly, "peace" in the white mouth demands maintaining a strict order by law, protecting the status quo, everybody "knowing his place." For the black, this peace spells poverty, oppression, alienation, indignity, humiliation, and being driven to the despair of violence in the bitter quest for the recognition of his essential being. Justice is white. Imagine a black who has raped a white not being sentenced to the rope. Imagine a white condemned to death for raping a black. Imagine what it is like to be, naturally, by birth, an alien in your country, needing a pass to move through it and a permit allowing you to settle there temporarily, on sufferance. Think of how many black males attain adulthood without a sojourn in prison.

Do you believe that beauty is the same, then, for black and white—or politics, or commitment, or literary and intellectual quality? And yet we all speak the same words seen through different prisms of ache. The best black writing comes from the profound shared popular aspiration toward freedom, but this identification does not help with the conundrum of not having an audience, not really; and neither does it of necessity confer quality on the work. As for the whites, despite the fact that some of them, some of us, are passionate observers, and sometime diligent escapees into the exquisitely vibrating space of a literary no-man's-land, we are alienated, marginalized, depoliticized, irrelevant. The heart is shrinking.

AND yet the task remains the same—to keep the word alive, or uncontaminated, or at least to allow it to have a meaning, to be a conduit of awareness. To remember that writing imposes an obligation of dignity, even if idiotically so, in the Dostoevskian sense. To try not to confuse writing with politics, given the fact that writing *is* politics. To keep up the noise level, to create confusion at least, to be an undermining campaigner for alternatives, that is for thinking. To fight against the laming of the palate. To keep an uncivil tongue in the head. To write against that fate worse than death, the wooden tongue clacking away in the wooden orifice in order to produce the wooden singsong praises to the big bang-bang and the fluttering flag. Not to knuckle down to oversimplification. To write like a bat out of hell, always screeching for the line of truth. To accept the compromise to survive, publishing by hook or by crook or by samizdat, beating the breast and gnashing the teeth, if you are that way inclined.

Propagating violence? Condoning mayhem? Penning prose poems to some homegrown Stalin? No. The craft excludes that. To accept, though with humility and compassion, that we have, that we all have, areas of rottenness within us, that which was stolen and killed by the censor, or weakened by fear. The white writer, moreover, must avoid the twin paternalist pitfalls of either trying to speak in the place of the oppressed blacks, or indulging in special pleading when it comes to their work. He must, at all costs, avoid having himself or his work be tainted by

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the epithets of martyrdom or courageous actions. Someone once said to me that there are two forms of corruption, the corruption of power and the corruption of suffering. The one needs to be avoided as badly as the other.

I have set these bleak thoughts about totalitarianism, and the role of the writer in a totalitarian situation, in South Africa, partly because it is the totalitarian situation that I know best, to the extent that a white living away from that country, with its hidden majority, can pretend to know it at all; but mainly because South Africa is at one and the same time a unique case and a microcosm of the many problems bedeviling colonial societies, or imperialist outposts, or multicultural nations, or simply developing countries; and also, if I may be for a moment a little imperialist myself, because the solution to the South African problem will be exemplary to the world, and will set Africa on the road to freedom.

THE SWORD AND THE PEN

Clausewitz, Philosopher of War
by Raymond Aron
translated by Christine Booker and Norman Stone

(Prentice-Hall, 418 pp., $19.95)

Raymond Aron's *Clausewitz* has finally appeared in America, nine years after its publication in France. Probably because it represented something of a wager, *Clausewitz* was, Aron believed, his most successful work. The first volume is a dazzling display of erudition. Not only did Aron read and discuss all the interpreters of the Prussian general, but in order to understand him correctly he had to find and compare different manuscripts and decide how they fit together. When Clausewitz died of cholera in 1831, he had only begun to revise his work. He was reorganizing it around a central idea that he had discovered, or rather rediscovered, in 1827—a dozen years after he had begun to write *On War*, 23 years after he had first formulated that idea: "the political object of war can be of two kinds: either totally to destroy the adversary, to eliminate his existence as a state, or else to prescribe peace terms to him."

This distinction between two types of historical wars—limited and absolute—had not been the original organizing notion of the book, which remained fragmentary at his death. Hence the frequent and violent disagreements among interpreters. Aron wanted to offer as definitive an interpretation as possible, and to base it on a close textual analysis. This is the kind of work—a monument of scholarship—that many French scholars used to do for their doctoral theses in their 30s or early 40s. Aron was determined to show that he could, at age 70, do as well as any of them, and produce a work even more learned and academically classical than his own thesis, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, written 40 years earlier.

Another reason for Aron's satisfaction is the very scope of the book. The first (French) volume is the most extended example of the genre in which Aron excelled: analysis of the essence of a political or social philosopher's thought. He had done a superb job on such writers as Montesquieu, Tocqueville, Marx, and Weber in his *Main Currents of Sociological Thought*, and on one book by Sartre in *History and the Dialectic of Violence*. His reading of Clausewitz was less polemical than the latter, more extensive than the studies in the former. The second (French) volume was an example of one of Aron's other kinds of writing: attempts at understanding the ambiguous nature of contemporary international politics. Many of his works in this field had been more journalistic than scholarly. (He had grown increasingly dissatisfied with the most scholarly—*Peace and War*.) Volume two of *Clausewitz*, called "the global age" (a title that does not figure in the English version), became a way of asking again some of the essential questions he had raised in all these earlier studies.

What attracted him to Clausewitz? Two main things, which correspond to the two volumes. First, Clausewitz as the greatest theoretician of war appealed to Aron for reasons of form as well as substance. By form, I mean that Aron, a disciple of Weber and admirer of Montesquieu and Tocqueville, found in Clausewitz a conception of theory comparable to those men's—and to Aron's own. They all proceed by ideal-types that help one understand the logic of a certain kind of behavior. Clausewitz's central concept (before the revision of 1827) was of war as a test of wills that tends by itself—that is, when cut off from political considerations—to "rise to extremes"; it tends toward the annihilation of the foe. They all recognize a tension between the ideal-type and concrete realities. (Clausewitz's work deals both with the implications of the former, and with the actual wars he had studied or fought.) They all point to the diversity of concrete types—in his case, limited and unlimited wars (and even the unlimited ones only approximate the ideal-type of absolute war). They all distinguish between "necessary" laws—the consequences of the abstract essence of a phenomenon—and the laws that express the relations between concrete phenomena, which can only operate in the realm of probability.

THUS, above all, they are enemies of determinism and theorists of uncertainty, convinced that the future cannot be predicted because even inevitable trends (such as the march toward democracy, in Tocqueville's vision) can take on different political shapes. To make a phenomenon intelligible is therefore not the same thing as making it predictable; rather, analysis helps one understand the nature and limits of uncertainty. In Clausewitz's case, this takes the form of his famous "trinitary conception" of war, which he describes as a product of "a blind natural impulse," the play of "probability and chance," and subordination to political aims—in other words, of passion, friction, and rationality. The *study* of war can never become a *science* of war, precisely because rationality is only one ingredient (greater in limited than in unlimited wars). Aron stresses particularly the similarities between Clausewitz's and Montesquieu's approaches, the differences be-

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tween Clausewitz and Kant's or Hegel's philosophies.

On substance, Aron was attracted to the "final" Clausewitz's insistence on the link between war and politics. Aron had defined the distinctiveness of international politics as the ever-present possibility of war. But war, as Clausewitz put it, has its own grammar, not its own logic: the logic is provided by politics. Thus, real war rises to extremes either if politics abdicates, or if the political purpose is, indeed, absolute—the destruction of the enemy. Part of Aron's own purpose was to destroy once and for all the image of Clausewitz as the champion of absolute war—especially since he found in Clausewitz's last conceptualization, and in the revisions dictated by it, a normative preference for limited wars. Thus he presents Clausewitz as "a theoretician of some sort of European equilibrium"—a man who, like Aron, could analyze coolly all the factors that often push war toward the extreme, yet whose own prescription was moderation and the deliberate victory of the rational element.

SECOND, Aron was attracted to Clausewitz because of his relevance to our own predicament. The last hundred or so years of human history have been dominated by war and the fear of war. When Clausewitz's message was ignored, the results were disastrous (in World War I, for example, which Aron examines in some depth one last time). But later Clausewitz's thought had a profound influence—particularly, as Aron shows with much detail, on Lenin and on Mao. It raises questions that are central to our understanding of the "global age." Thus, for example, thinking of the Spanish mass revolt against Napoleon, Clausewitz mentioned the participation of the people (for instance, in guerrilla warfare) as one of the factors that lead to "absolute" war; and indeed, the two world wars of this century have seen both a massive participation of the people—especially because of industrial mobilization—*and* the triumph of passions and of the will to destroy the enemy. Aron also calls attention to the normative function of the concept of absolute war, which is to remind adversaries that they risk committing suicide together—which raises, of course, the issue of Clausewitz's relevance to the nuclear age.

Thus Aron examines once more the dilemmas of nuclear deterrence.

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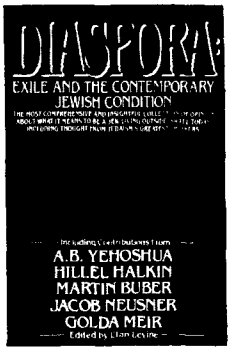

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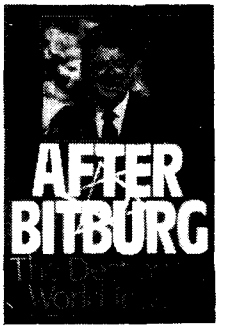

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Can mankind live indefinitely without reaching the moment of truth—that is, of battle—when states finally have "to pay cash"? Can "living on credit" be guaranteed by a threat of total destruction? Is it not wiser to adopt a strategy of limitation, if deterrence fails? Aron points out that all so-called theories of nuclear strategy are merely heuristic models that offer no "rational" solution. What is new in the nuclear age is the disparity between the resources committed by each adversary, and the infinite stakes and risks. Therefore "analysts have rediscovered the intrinsic unity between warlike and political acts at which the Prussian general had arrived only by reflection at the end of his life."

Clausewitz, far from having been made obsolete by nuclear weapons, is more relevant than ever: as a warning against all-out nuclear war, an invitation to preserve peace through deterrence (which Aron wisely distinguishes from a state of war), and a reminder of the fact that in the nuclear age only limited wars are at all sensible—and these presuppose communication and agreement between the adversaries. Aron concludes by saying that nuclear weapons are only for deterrence, not for decisions: "nothing prevents the West from appreciating that its political goals require neither the use of nuclear weapons nor the physical destruction of the enemy." For "as long as the principle of annihilation applied to armies only, war, even when it was absolute and aimed at disarming the enemy, could be an instrument of policy. . . . In the nuclear age, the only chance of saving humanity from itself is arms control by rational decision of the state" (my translation).

THUS this book stands at the crossroads of two related concerns. One is the rehabilitation of Clausewitz, the attempt to prove once and for all that he was not the advocate of total war, that the theorist who formulated the grammar of absolute war was in fact superseded by the sociologist who distinguished moderate and immoderate wars, or by the "praxeologist" who not only asserted the primacy of politics but leaned toward limited political goals. The other is the search for possibilities of moderation in the nuclear world, even though international politics remains a contest that can always turn violent, and even though violence can now mean total destruction.

If one remains skeptical, like Aron, about the chances of a mutation of world politics, a sudden leap beyond the clash of sovereign states, but nevertheless remains eager to preserve opportunities of compromise and moderation, Clausewitz cannot fail to appear as an essential thinker—and Aron's affinity for him becomes even more clear. Clausewitz, says Aron, was an 18th-century man who understood the radical novelty of the wars of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic era—nationalism, mass conscription armies, popular uprisings. Aron was a man of the 20th century, scarred, fascinated, and repelled by total war, who wanted to recapture the traditional virtues of the balance of power and of limited wars. Moreover, Aron was always drawn to the study of men of action who were also reflective, could rise above their deeds, and leave an intellectual distillation of their experience—men like de Gaulle or Kissinger.

ARON throughout is attentive to the complexity of Clausewitz's thinking. He points out, for instance, the distinction between political goals and military strategies: a strategy of military annihilation can serve limited ends (Bismarck in the Franco-Prussian War), while a policy of unlimited ends can be served by a strategy of attrition (World War I). Aron explores all the facets of Clausewitz's thought about the respective merits of the offensive and the defensive (which he deemed stronger), and about the importance of the moral versus the physical dimensions of military power. The part of the work devoted to contemporary war and politics is complex because Aron, as usual, insists on careful distinctions (for instance, between the violence of war and social coercion; or between revolutionary wars, such as Mao's, which are wars of annihilation, and wars of national liberation, which need not be, even if terror is one of the techniques used).

The thread that runs through all the analyses in this half of the book is the relation between political ends and military means. The deficiencies of this relation account for Aron's stern evaluation of the Algerian War (France lacked any sensible political goal) and the Vietnam War (the United States never found a strategy adequate to its political goal and resorted to the wrong tactics, such as massive bombing). This concern for the ties between war and politics also explains his criticisms of the American "neo-Clausewitzian" nuclear strategists, who focus on the weapons rather than on the international context (a flaw that has become even worse in recent years).

THE American reader of *Clausewitz* will find, especially in the second half, many comments on issues that have become central (and banal) in recent American debates. What effect does the ratio of nuclear forces have on the outcome of political crises? (Aron gives a very "non-nuclear" interpretation of the Berlin crisis of the late 1950s and of the Cuban missile crisis.) Can there be a diplomatic exploitation of nuclear threats? (In his view, they provide "neither a way of imposing a decision nor a way to imperial power.") What effect have nuclear weapons had on world politics? (They have brought about a situation in which the global nuclear balance does not determine the political and military realities at lower levels and in separate regions.) What consequences will the lesser likelihood of general war—because of nuclear weapons—have for the traditional logic of international relations? (The only change will be in the forms of war.) The interest of these arguments lies both in Aron's unfailing reasonableness and in the distinctiveness of his point of view: a kind of informed and concerned detachment that gives him a perspective that is often missing in American discussions of such subjects.

Aron examined these subjects at least twice again, after the publication of *Clausewitz*: once in his *Memoirs*, briefly, and once in an essay that was unfinished when he died and was published in May 1984. On the whole, he did not change his mind. He remained convinced, in particular, that the Soviets were excellent Clausewitzians, not because of their bellicosity, but because of the clear connection they make between political aims and the resort to force, and also because they do not confuse the troubled peace in which we live with actual war among states, any more than they confuse the class struggle with civil war.

Clausewitz is a rich and complex book. It is also, unfortunately, a book that hasn't survived translation well. Aron's prose is straightforward and lucid, but extremely condensed and frequently abstract; it cannot be

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translated elegantly without considerable reformation. The English of this translation ranges from the awkward to the inaccurate. Moreover, in order to combine the two French volumes into a single one, the English and American publishers have committed an act of intellectual vandalism. Volume one ends, in French, with 180 pages of so-called notes. These are actually 40 essays that deal with such topics as the two Prussian military reformers Scharnhorst and Gneisenau, Clausewitz and the strategic debate of his time, Clausewitz and Kant, and a large number of past and modern commentators of Clausewitz, with whom Aron often disagrees. These notes are valuable, not only for their scholarship, but for their range and sharpness. They have been dropped from the American, as well as the English, editions.

Those who are interested only in the essence of Clausewitz's thought should read Michael Howard's brilliant essay *Clausewitz* in the *Modern Masters* series—a tour de force that offers the same interpretation as Aron's, and in 76 pages. But those who want to see how erudition and the most incisive common sense result in profound political judgment—at the cost of spreading more questions than assurances about our present and future—should brave the complexities of Aron. So should all those who want to see how, in the last decade of his life, such a quintessentially French writer once more paid tribute to German thought—and to the existence of a powerful liberal, or at least moderate, tradition in it.

STANLEY HOFFMANN

Stanley Hoffmann is Douglas Dillon Professor of the Civilization of France and chairman of the Center for European Studies at Harvard University.

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(Norton, 570 pp., $16.95)

John Calvin Batchelor is a fearless writer. He strides confidently into murky moral territory that others warily skirt, returning with tales of good and evil, sin and repentance, tyranny and justice, duty and destiny. He writes suspense stories with a strong dash of metaphysics, comic novels that brood about human depravity. He has fashioned a distinctive prose style that is at once vigorous and abstruse. His last novel, *The Birth of the People's Republic of Antarctica*, was a cerebral futuristic allegory populated with madmen, warlords, cannibals, and refugees all scrabbling to survive under the shadow of the apocalypse. In it, his appropriately named Norse-American narrator, Grim, chronicled nothing less than "the politics and ruination of the end of the earth."

In *American Falls*, Batchelor moves from eschatology to history, from the frozen wastelands of Antarctica in the 1990s to the dissolute cities of the American North and South in the waning days of the Civil War. He opens the novel the week before the election of 1864. The war has reached a bloody deadlock. The North, shaken by the draft riots in New York and elsewhere, is increasingly vulnerable to civilian unrest and sporadic acts of sabotage; and Lincoln, sunk in despondency at the White House, does not believe that he will be reelected. Although the Confederates have abandoned hope of a military victory, they cling to the notion of an armistice. Jefferson Davis's strategy is to weaken the Union cause by refusing to surrender on the Southern battlefields and by fomenting dissent in the Northern states. In the fall of 1864 he directs the Confederate Secret Service in Canada to infiltrate a number of major cities with cadres of volunteers, who are to spread anarchy by burning and looting property and terrorizing the citizenry.

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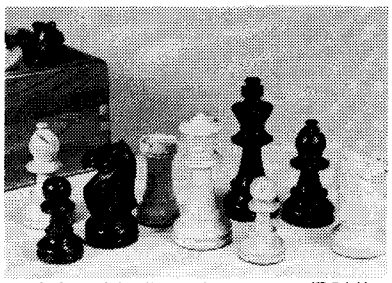

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The two fictional protagonists at the heart of the novel are spies, and the battles they fight and witness are far from Sherman's troops in Atlanta. John Oliphant, a jaded master agent for the Confederate States Secret Service, has been recalled from Europe on a final, implausible mission: he is to negotiate "a means to extend the war by as much as a year by loosening the Union military stranglehold on the South." He is headed from Secret Service headquarters in Toronto to New York, to strike a deal with Thurlow Weed, the corrupt Republican Party boss (and Lincoln's chief financier), over the sale of Confederate cotton. Amaziah Butter, a raw volunteer recruit for the United States Secret Service, has been assigned by Secretary of State Seward to ferret out the truth about the rumors of an election-day plot by the rebels to launch coordinated raids on the North. He quickly surmises (not entirely correctly) that Oliphant is the key to the operation in New York City, and perhaps the most dangerous of all the Confederate saboteurs. He takes it upon himself to capture him.

THE MEN appear to be a study in contrasts. Oliphant is gentlemanly, philosophical, morally tormented—the novel's tragic hero. A Northerner whose wife and lover are Southerners, he deplores the dissolution of his country and despises himself for contributing to a cause that he never really embraced. "The bottom truth was that he had committed himself to rebellion and calamity because he was in love with a woman who could never be his." Butter, a frontiersman from Maine, is blunt, practical, accident-prone, and plagued by dyspepsia and self-doubt—the novel's comic hero. "I'm a babe in this business," he frankly confides to a friend. But Batchelor uses these differences to dramatize his protagonists' shared destinies, and to illustrate the ways in which civil war twists loyalties and shatters consciences. Oliphant and Butter are both impassioned patriots with a distaste for petty—and murderous—intrigue. Their duties, however, implicate them in the most unsavory schemes of the two War Departments, and through them we witness a series of hidden wars from which high government officials emerge as groveling profiteers, military heroes as indiscriminate murderers, and earnest young soldiers as arsonists and anarchists.

Batchelor had all the pieces for a dazzling historical novel. His knowledge of the Civil War is prodigious, and his sardonic view of history is well suited to this monumental saga of a sideshow that sputtered and of men who died for their country while scheming against it. The structure of *American Falls* is as studiously controlled as the action is chaotic. Niagara Falls is the setting for both the opening and closing scenes. The novel alternates evenly between Oliphant's reluctant submersion in the plot to torch New York and Butter's consuming obsession with Oliphant's guilt (not to mention their love affairs—Oliphant's long-standing, Butter's aborning); between Cabinet meetings and guerrilla scheming; between encounters at the Astor Hotel in New York and at Willard's Hotel in Washington. Yet despite all this care, the novel still creaks and groans, stalls and bounds forward, and occasionally wanders off course. Batchelor undercuts the wit and drama of his tales of urban skulduggery by interjecting history lessons and cluttering the stage with superfluous characters. He works out variations on his theme of American falls that are intellectually dexterous but often emotionally implausible.

Thus he meticulously unravels the coils of intrigue in the New York underworld of guerrillas, detectives, and bowery thugs and the back-room scheming of highly placed double agents (including the bullying chief of the U.S. Secret Service himself, Lafayette C. Baker), but his comprehensiveness tends to flatten suspense rather than build it. When it comes to establishing his historical vision, Batchelor steps away from the desperate scrambles of all his anti-Union groups and Union factions to delineate place and character through grand symbol and metaphor. In his satiric universe, individuals generally struggle in vain against the tides of history and the corruptibility of human nature. Characters are driven less by their own psychological motives than by Batchelor's moral vision. Oliphant represents the self-destructive fury of the Civil War, and he is burdened with the novel's most labored lines: ". . . as America was a nation divided against herself, I am a man divided against myself"; or,

> He must make the rending choice between his responsibilities as son and husband and lover and father and agent and citizen. Enough of the abstractions of Southern liberty and Northern Unionism and Southern republicanism and Northern tyranny. . . . [T]here was a madness upon this country like a fever, and it was as real and deadly as a fever, and it must be stopped!

Yet it is never entirely clear how seriously Batchelor means us to take his hero's high-minded handwringing. At times Oliphant's reflections are indistinguishable from Batchelor's. At other times he appears as a rather foolish poseur. Oliphant's doomed love affair with his sister-in-law, Narcissa—the novel's pivotal human relationship—is presented as yet another socio-historical-political drama. Narcissa, herself a Confederate agent, is a Batchelor prototype: an intelligent, angry character (her family has been, as Butter notes sympathetically, "completely smashed up by the war") who deludes herself into believing that she can control her future. The critical choice of Oliphant's life occurs when he realizes that if he is to secure her freedom he must barter her to a British friend with connections. "What did honor require?" he asks himself melodramatically. "What did decency demand? What did love command?" In fact, Oliphant has long since relinquished all real claims to honor, decency, and love, and this cry is doubtless meant to reveal the disparity between his outmoded ideals and his present predicament. But Oliphant's personal tragedy recedes as Batchelor explicates the interlocking ironies.

IN geopolitical relations too, Batchelor's voice presses in upon his narrative. In one breath he catches up on current military maneuvers and exposes the pervasive decadence of the era—all in period prose so laden with ornate conceits that the comic intention collapses under the weight. Regarding France's adventurism in Mexico and the Confederacy's complicity with Napoleon III, Oliphant observes, "And so while the buzzards of Europe circled, Mexico writhed." Willard's Hotel in Washington, the central political and social gathering place, is a "rolling battlefield of words and impotent demonstrations." Its dining room "tossed up gossip of a menu of names":

> There was the flat soup of George B. McClellan, now resigned (November 14) from the Army in the disgrace of yet another mixed defeat, though his fate was not unhappy given the influence of his supporters . . . and the opinion that Lincoln had prevailed less in the polling

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places than in Mobile, Atlanta, and the Shenandoah Valley. . . .

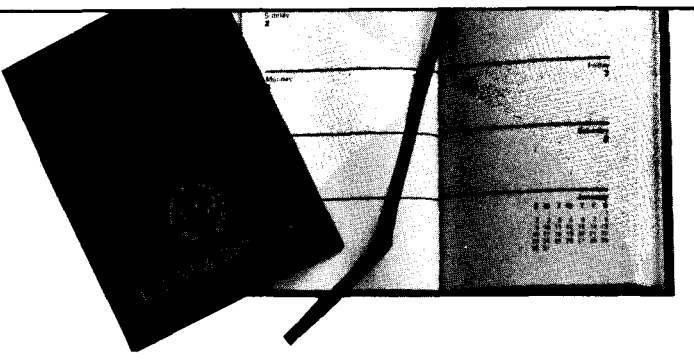
And there was also news of satellite figures, like appetizers, that sated palates for a time: Stanton was out of his sickbed and back breathing fire at the War Department; Senator Sumner was still eyeing Seward's job at State. . . .

A scrutinous diner, and eavesdropper, would have reached past all these tidbits soon enough, for he would have sensed when he entered the arena that there was only one desired dish the assembled hungered after—the special of the day, the week, the month, and perhaps the war. The topic was Major-General William T. Sherman and his seventy-thousand-man army at Atlanta. One could smell it thick and tart; one could taste it like saddle of venison; one could hear it sizzle in the hoary or beardless mouths.

It's a bit caloric, even for those with a taste for such flourishes.

Nevertheless, *American Falls* contains numerous scenes where well-crafted fiction prevails over self-conscious ingenuity. Batchelor displays a talent for portraiture he kept well hidden in the mythic *People's Republic of Antarctica*. In a single scene he reduces to size mighty politicians and war heroes. The infamous War Secretary Stanton, "a vitriolic, cruel-minded, and unforgiving patriot; an Episcopalian who did not go to church," was "squat and black bearded, at 50, without a mustache but with a silver streak in his thinning hair and shaped beard that made it look as if lightning had struck twice. He peered over egg-shaped spectacles, and furiously." The political general, Ben Butler, is shown decked out in a gleaming saber that sweeps the floor. Butter notes that "he had to lift the sword very high as he stepped across the parlor and then up before a tall front window." Stagily staring outside, Butler addresses his audience of underlings with his back.

All of this bloated vanity appears in wry contrast to the unlikely heroism of Amaziah Butter. With his undisguised insecurities, his furious bungling, his constant physical ailments—and his sharp observations and sure instincts—Butter convincingly conveys the unexpected moments of comedy in the war. Here Batchelor succeeds in smoothly blending history and fiction, and in effectively describing the degeneration of the Union. Two days before the election, Lafayette Baker slips off to Canada to make his own private pacts, and inexplicably puts Butter in charge of surveillance in New York. To Butter's



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dismay, his superiors are more concerned about avenging their personal grievances than they are about defusing the threat posed by the rebels. What's more, they seem intent upon using his good detective work to further their ambitions. Infuriated by the flurry of peremptory telegrams from his commander in Canada and the contradictory orders of Seward in Washington and Generals Dix and Butler in New York, he simply devotes himself to the job at hand. His scrupulous attention to detail in the midst of impending disaster is funny and touching.

> Whether or not Lafayette Baker trusted him, whether or not he was there in New York only as a sop to Seward, Butter did not intend to allow himself to be overwhelmed by events without keeping a record of his defeat. He asked Walter Daggett, "What time did Oliphant turn out the light?"

THE novel's real tour de force comes in the final wind-swept chapter at Niagara Falls, when Butter and his men finally close in upon Oliphant. The writing here is brisk, the dialogue clipped and credible, the images concrete. The detectives' hastily conceived strategy, their frantic formulations of Oliphant's thinking, their abortive first moves, and their final breakthrough are breathlessly and wittily described. When at last they burst into Oliphant's hotel room, they find his walking cane on the bed, his coat and hat, the desk pushed to the window facing south, and a tidy packet of correspondence with a courteous request to Butter to mail the letters, "in the event of my death, or if you do not hear from me within one month of the end of the war. . . . My apologies for all of it. . . . Jn. C. Oliphant." With these modest props, and in Butter's subsequent harried pursuit in the snow by the river, Batchelor both captures the poignancy of Oliphant's fate and imaginatively reshapes a popular convention.

In *The Birth of the People's Republic of Antarctica*, Grim is told that

> tragedy was too easy to be deep wisdom, all one had to do was pull up a chair and moan about betrayal, hatred, slaughter, and get the audience to weep at the meaninglessness of murdered innocence. It was comedy . . . that was the sublime endeavor; for one to get that same audience to laugh in the face of defeat or at their own fears, that was a worthy challenge.

Perhaps it is because Batchelor feels more confident depicting betrayal and slaughter and the meaninglessness of murdered innocence that he lavishes so much energy on it. In *Antarctica*, he never really got past his tales of moral turpitude. In *American Falls*, with its story of the little men behind the big war, he frequently does. Discovering the note from Oliphant in the hotel room, Butter says simply, "He's made me his postman." It is shrewd and guileless Amaziah Butter who provides a novel glimpse into the mindless savagery, patent absurdities, and blind faith of the Civil War.

DOROTHY WICKENDEN

A TRAMP IS BORN

Chaplin: His Life and Art by David Robinson

(McGraw-Hill, 792 pp., $24.95)

In February 1914, an English music hall comedian who was tired of touring America and of live audiences and of small paydays walked onto the set of Max Sennett's Keystone Studios in Los Angeles in a new costume. He had joined Sennett's company a month before at $150 a week, and even as a top-hatted dude in his first film, *Making a Living*, had attracted favorable trade press attention. But his new costume immediately suggested a different character—a character close to his own brooding and mercurial nature. It was built on contradictions: small derby and large shoes, swank cane and threadbare coat. "Charlie" was a tramp whose anarchy and pathos took revenge on Charles Chaplin's own bitter South London childhood, and called society into question. With Chaplin, vaudeville would throw up to American democracy its first enduring theatrical genius: a man whose clowning fulfilled Tocqueville's prediction that one day the pit would make laws for the boxes.

"Another longing was to be a romantic actor, but he was too small and his diction too uncultured," Chaplin wrote, reflecting on his early years in the "novel" for *Limelight* (1952). "Necessity made him turn to comedy, which he loathed because it demanded an intimacy with his audience which he did not feel and which did not come naturally to him." Chaplin's longing for vindictive triumph and his obsessive need to control his world, especially his world of work, sprang from the punishing insecurity of his childhood, uniquely documented in David Robinson's meticulous and fascinating new book. Chaplin and his older brother Sid were raised by their spirited but hard-pressed mother, Hannah Chaplin, who as "Lily Harley—The Essence of Refinement" showed early promise as a music hall singer, but soon languished into poverty, drunkenness, and finally dementia. As boys, the Chaplins were in and out of the workhouse. Their drunk and absent father, Charles Chaplin Sr., a music hall singing star also fallen on hard times, refused to pay maintenance. Hannah Chaplin frequently had to be hospitalized because of her mental condition. The impoverishment of Chaplin's early years was not just financial (although poverty made Chaplin shrewd and careful with money); it was also emotional. In 1900, when he was 11, Chaplin was kissed for the first time by his father, who died that year at the age of 37. In 1903, Chaplin himself had to commit his beloved mother to an asylum. She was 40. ("Says she wants to get out of the world," one doctor's report read.) "If you'd given me a cup of tea that afternoon," Hannah later rebuked Chaplin, who carried the guilt of betrayal into his comedy, "I'd have been alright."

With a desire to shine, and with almost no formal education, Chaplin was inevitably drawn to the stage. He was professional by the age of ten, and he built up a solid reputation during his early years of touring with child acts. At 16, he was already of sufficient stature to be included in the first edition of *The Green Room*, a kind of *Who's Who* of the Edwardian stage aristocracy, which list-

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ed him as "impersonator, mimic, and sand dancer." But it was with Fred Karno's music hall troupe, which Chaplin joined in 1908 and left after his third tour of America in 1914 to try movies, that he came into his own as a star comic turn. With Karno, Chaplin evolved his running-sliding right-angle turn, and the maneuver of mixing sentiment with slapstick. "Wistful," Karno would coach. Despite Chaplin's critical success with the troupe, his self-absorption was frequently seen by his cohorts as unfriendliness, his passion for self-improvement as highfalutin. "He wasn't very likeable," Karno said. "I've known him to go whole weeks without saying a word to anyone in the company. . . . On the whole he was dour and unsociable. He lived like a monk, had a horror of drink, and put most of his salary into the bank as soon as he got it."

But Chaplin's obsessional qualities become hilarious in the protean figure of "Charlie," a character who makes Chaplin's panic and dreamy isolation sensational. Where the Sennett car chase revved up the old Western rhythm to the speed of the new combustion engine, Chaplin's "Charlie" registered the dilemma posed by American society's new industrial momentum: at a certain speed all things disintegrate. At once ruthless and restless, "Charlie" is a character whose exaggerated insecurity incarnates for a competitive society its terror and expectation. Chaplin explained "Charlie" this way:

> . . . a tramp, a gentleman, a poet, a dreamer, a lonely fellow always hopeful of romance and adventure. He would have you believe he is a duke, a scientist, a musician, a polo-player. However, he is not above picking up cigarette butts or robbing a baby of his candy. And of course he is not above kicking a lady in the rear.

"I only want to work about five years," Chaplin wrote to his brother in 1913, explaining the movie offer and the prospect of earning $150 a week, "and then we are independent for life. I shall save like a son of a gun."

Chaplin quickly learned how to appropriate film to his own comic image. "If what you're doing is funny, you don't have to be funny doing it," he explained. He bridled at the hack directors assigned to rush the Sennett two-reelers into the cinemas. Chaplin even boycotted being directed by Sennett's star and girlfriend Mabel Normand. "This is my work," he told her, refusing to continue after she brushed aside one of his comedy ideas. Chaplin put up all his savings ($1,500) as a guarantee against losses in order to coax Sennett into letting him direct his own comedies.

CHARLIE CHAPLIN BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

In 1914 Chaplin directed, wrote, and starred in 16 films in six months. With his mythic outline and his acrobatic aggression, "Charlie" went straight to the public's heart. Chaplin became a national obsession. He was the first performer to benefit from the new medium's capability of infinite repetition. He could be everywhere in America at once. And he was. The "Charlie" persona was franchised as dolls, toys, books, a comic strip. The songs of the day capitalized and evoked him: "Charlie Chaplin Glide," "Those Charlie Chaplin Feet," "Charlie Chaplin, The Funniest Man in Pictures" ("He tips his hat and twirls his cane/His moustache drives the girls insane. . ."). By 1916, at the age of 27, Chaplin was earning $10,000 a week, which, with extras, came to $670,000 a year.

Chaplin soon had his own production company and his own stable of actors. "He's here," the call would go up as his chauffeured limousine approached the studio gates; and then, one observer reported, "instantly everybody stopped whatever they were doing. Then Chaplin entered the gates." In 1919 Chaplin joined with Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks Jr. to form United Artists, a ground-breaking venture that allowed the stars both to produce their movies and to share in the distribution profits. Chaplin controlled his means of production, ensuring the high quality of his product. He could make the rules to suit himself: the quintessential capitalist whose laughter teased the injustices of capitalist society.

A perfectionist, Chaplin was the first Hollywood comedian to insist on retakes. "Chaplin's whole approach of making take after take until he was totally satisfied," writes David Robinson, "was something new in Hollywood." The ratio of footage shot to what was shown was enormous. In *The Kid* (1920), one of the few films where a subsidiary plot shifts the focus away from the tramp, Chaplin shot 278,573 feet of film and used 5,250. In his comic epic *The Gold Rush* (1925), Chaplin shot 231,505 feet and edited the film down to 8,555; and *The Great Dictator* (1940) was cut from 477,440 feet to 11,628. Chaplin

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would throw out a week's work if he felt it wasn't right, or lavish as much as three days on an important shot like the final close-up in *City Lights* (1931).

Buster Keaton's comedies joked about the illusions of cinema; Chaplin's films joked about the illusions of bourgeois life. He brought to film a European idea of individualism, the person not separate from, but related to, his community. From his early playful comedies (*The Tramp*, 1916; *Easy Street*, 1917; *The Immigrant*, 1917) to his later more ambitious works, "Charlie" is victimized by a vicious urban world and brings forth its contradictions. Chaplin's imagery—eating his boot in *The Gold Rush*, asleep in the arms of the statue of Justice in *City Lights*, breaking down among the dynamos in *Modern Times* (1936)—caught the culture's sense of oppression. His comedy said the uncomfortable to a smug and powerful society. *Work* (1915), for instance, prefigures Lucky and Pozzo in *Waiting for Godot* with a shot of "Charlie" as a human cart horse. He pulls a heavy load uphill while his boss flicks a whip at him from the front seat. David Robinson rightly calls this a "masterly and unforgettable image of the exploitation of labour." Over the years, Chaplin—alone among his peers—would concentrate his laughter on this cunning interplay of slapstick and social comment. "My artistry," said Chaplin, who always insisted that on stage he lacked "that come hither thing," "is a bit austere—it is austere."

He was the foremost among a handful of great American low comics (Keaton, the Marx Brothers, Bobby Clark, Bert Lahr) who were the creative models for the next theatrical generation's high art. Chaplin's detachment, the gesture counterpointing the ideas, is what so appealed to Bertolt Brecht, who saw Chaplin as the perfect "epic actor"; Chaplin's comedy helped to formulate Brecht's own idea of "epic theater." For Meyerhold, the depth, brevity, and contrast in Chaplin's caricature made him the ultimate *cabotin*, the strolling player who can work miracles with his technical mastery. "Chaplin," wrote Meyerhold, "speaks to us as a poet. Next he speaks to us as a citizen because through his work there runs a single thread: Charlie Chaplin defender of the weak. . . ."

Between 1914 and 1921, when Chaplin worked for Essanay and Mutual, he made 71 films. With United Artists, the playful anarchy of his early period gave way to a greater artistic self-consciousness. He worked more deliberately and on a much larger scale. (Meyerhold wrote of that period: "He was playing with such significance that he was now fit to rank alongside such literary masters as Balzac, Dickens, Dostoyevsky. He crossed that Rubicon and became a master destined to create vast, monumental canvases.") Chaplin's pantomime cut across cultures; he knew that "if I talked, I would become like any other comedian." At first he poohpoohed sound: "I'll give talkies three years"; and then he made a few ingenious concessions to it in his great films of the 1930s, *City Lights* and *Modern Times*. Chaplin was the last holdout against talkies. *City Lights* was made three years after sound, *Modern Times* seven. They were the swan song of the first great age of film, and when Chaplin walked down the road hand in hand with Paulette Goddard in the finale of *Modern Times*, there was no turning back either for him or for the silent film. "Everything I do is a dance," Chaplin said; and sound would put an end to it. "Dialogue always slows action," he explained, "because action must wait upon words."

Chaplin's life was every bit as much a farce epic as his films. "I don't think Charlie is what I would call devoted to anybody," said the director Eddie Sutherland, who worked with him. He certainly wasn't devoted to his first two teenage brides, whose divorce settlements created national headlines. "Chaplin may not be a devoted husband," quipped Will Rogers, "But he's worth marrying." Chaplin was in love with his work, and he could only manage relationships in which the women were extensions (usually) of that work: Paulette Goddard, Georgia Hale, Edna Purviance (who called him "Broodie"), and the hot-blooded Pola Negri (who called him everything else when he broke off their engagement). Chaplin finally found happiness with the devoted Oona O'Neill, the teenage daughter of Eugene O'Neill. They married when Chaplin was 55, and she bore him eight children before his death in 1977 at the age of 88. Robinson's distinguished book owes much of its high quality to Oona Chaplin, who allowed him sole access to the Chaplin archive. Robinson repays the favor by tactful reportage of Chaplin's many amorous scandals and a polite account of his last marriage.

ROBINSON'S work is meant, he says, to be read as a complement to Chaplin's own memoir, with its unwittingly egotistical title *My Autobiography*. With the aid of Chaplin's work notes, studio records, and outtakes from his films, Robinson builds up a superbly detailed account of the making of Chaplin's comic oeuvre. He also provides marvelous appendixes, including the shooting schedules and ratios of the films, a Chaplin chronology, filmography, bibliography, a Chaplin's *Who's Who*, and, most interesting of all, a summary of the 1,900-page FBI dossier on Chaplin. As early as 1921, the FBI had been watching him for signs of "communist" activity. Over the years his friendships with left-wing émigrés such as Hanns Eisler, Lion Feuchtwanger, Brecht, and others found their way into the files. Chaplin was too much the instinctive anarchist to join any party, but he did lend personal and financial support to many progressive causes. He was rich, and outspoken on social issues; and he staunchly refused to take American citizenship. In the 1950s, when America was gripped by anticom-

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munist delirium, Chaplin was vilified, the FBI feeding Hollywood gossip columnists misinformation. In 1952 he left America, finally to settle in Switzerland. He returned to the United States 20 years later to receive a special Academy Award. By then the nation's style of laughter had been virtually purged of social content. Chaplin was still king, but on a field of corpses.

Robinson's book documents Chaplin's enormous theatrical achievement as actor, director, writer, and musician. But like all tricksters, Chaplin the man eludes him, perhaps because this most famous film chameleon had no center. Still, every aspect of Chaplin's life was extraordinary. "I'm essentially an entrance and exit man," Chaplin said, "Good exits and entrances." Robinson's book is a masterful account of what Chaplin left behind: a prodigious clown in a world of woe.

JOHN LAHR

John Lahr is the author most recently of *Automatic Vaudeville: Essays on Star Turns* (Knopf).

DIMMER LIGHTS, SMALLER CITY

Ransom
by Jay McInerney

(Vintage Books, 279 pp., $5.95 paper)

Despite the undeniable beauty of Kyoto's temples and gardens, I have never liked it very much. It shares with San Francisco and Amsterdam a combination of smug provinciality, and of outsiders playing out their bizarre fantasies. It attracts the worst kind of expatriates: foreigners go to Tokyo to work, but to Kyoto to "find themselves." Gary Snyder and Alan Watts felt at home there.

Kyoto, in short, is the perfect backdrop for Jay McInerney's latest report on the state of despair of the blank generation. His characters are precisely the kind of superannuated Dharma Bums one wishes to avoid. Their headquarters is a bar called Buffalo Rome (shades of Haight Ashbury). The entertainment is provided by a band of Japanese blues players pretending to be blacks from the south side of Chicago. This offers some very funny dialogue full of misunderstood American slang. McInerney also has fun with the absurd Japanese attempts to use English in advertising:

Let's Sauna
Let's Sauna for my happy
Let's Sauna for your happy
Let's Sauna for joyful life
Let's Sauna for our happy
Oh beautiful day, healthy day, nice a day.
Let's Sauna all happy.

Such melancholy prose will be familiar to anyone who has ever had to "correct" Japanese-English copy, only to see it corrected back to its original form by the insulted hack who composed it in the first place. Ransom, McInerney's hero, corrects such copy for a living, while training as a karate fighter to "find himself." Other denizens of Buffalo Rome include a Marine veteran called De Vito, who sports a samurai topknot and is equally immersed in martial arts; and a potter who spends most of his time being humiliated by a Master in the mountains. Much of the novel, in fact, is about American boys being beaten or humiliated by Japanese, a somewhat masochistic read in Reagan's America. The joke, in other words, is that everybody tries to be something he is not, and "selves" are scattered all over the place in the process.

The Japanese only play a peripheral role, however, in this very American morality tale. And while McInerney, quite rightly, looks at their posturing with an acidly ironic eye, he treats the no less absurd behavior of some of the Americans, especially Ransom, somewhat more seriously. Ransom's struggles in the karate gym (or dojo) are very serious business. There is an interesting irony in the situation. Ransom appears to suffer from a surplus of chivalry: he likes to help people, but usually gets them in worse trouble. The morality of the dojo is based on a rather special

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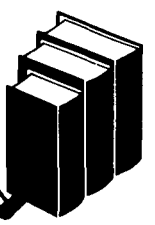

"WE HAVE SEEN the (South Africa) pattern often in the past. The liberal mentality hated Chiang Kai-shek and did everything it could to bring him down. We got Mao Tse-tung instead, and thirty million corpses. The liberal mentality pursued an unrelenting campaign against the corrupt Batista, so we got Castro and his concentration camps. The liberal mentality campaigned against the Shah and helped to give us the Ayatollah. Thieu was unsatisfactory so we got Communism and 555,000 boat people. Lon Nol was a CIA tool. We got Pol Pot."

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kind of chivalry, it seems: the harder you sock your opponent in the stomach, the more you help him.

Ransom is an outsider among outsiders, a kind of reactionary Dharma Bum who hates people who "sacrifice their gray matter to the gods of the hash pipe." He disapproves of promiscuity, too, and he drinks nothing but tea. His tough little jokes, cracked, one imagines, out of the corner of his mouth, remind one of a mixed-up Clint Eastwood or Humphrey Bogart. Ransom: even his name has the resonance of tough-guy dandyism. Like Bogart in Casablanca, he is a Loner with a Past who warns women to stay away from him lest they get hurt. In comes a glamorous woman who tries to seduce him, nevertheless. And then there is an evil opponent—in this case De Vito, with his samurai fantasies—who insists on a fight to the death.

NEAR THE END of the story the glamorous girl confesses that her seduction game was all plot, masterminded by the hero's unspeakable dad, to get Ransom back to America. But she cannot go on deceiving the hero any longer; she really loves him now. She disappears mysteriously and the book ends with the final fight, which Ransom had been avoiding. But, as our man says out of the corner of his mouth, "Some things won't go away unless you face them head-on."

Not only does Ransom talk like Eastwood, but he is in an Eastwood picture, give or take a few details. (It's hard to imagine Eastwood's dad.) It's not quite clear to me whether McInerney deliberately wrote a postmodernist pastiche of Hollywood macho movies. If he did, the book is clever but unsatisfying—a mildly witty "exercise de style" about people caught up in the collective dreams of our culture and times.

The publisher's blurb suggests otherwise, however. It speaks of "a brilliantly detailed pattern of hope and disillusionment, power and weakness . . . a novel of grand scale and serious implications." So let us take Ransom and his soul-searching seriously. (Perhaps we should take Eastwood seriously too; he is, after all, the darling of the upwardly mobile.) But the problem with Ransom is that his problems do not seem terribly serious. All right, he had a mixed-up childhood, a mother who died of cancer, and a possessive TV-producer father who represents Hollywood cynicism at its worst. And yes, he got into some hot water in Pakistan, where he lost friends to ill-advised smuggling adventures and heroin. But this is the stuff of rock songs, not literature.

IT IS possible that Ransom means something special to people of his age and culture: middle-class Americans in their early 30s. Although I am not American (but am in my early 30s), I think I can detect certain pointers in this direction. The shadow of Vietnam hangs over the story. There is a sense of lost innocence, of picking up the pieces. De Vito, the samurai fanatic, just missed going to Vietnam after enlisting "with the fervent desire to see combat." Miles Ryder, owner of Buffalo Rome, purveyor to the Japanese of cowboy boots and Stetsons, and Ransom's best friend, had a father in Vietnam, who would send snapshots home "of himself and several buddies with half-a-dozen Saigon whores." The glamorous girl sent by Ransom *père* to get Ransom *fils* home is an actress impersonating a Vietnamese refugee in trouble. As dad explains it: "I made her Vietnamese. You can't help but stir passions with that war. . . ."

One is reminded a little of another generation in another country: the British young, who narrowly escaped getting blown out of the trenches in World War I. The butchery of that war was incomparably worse than Vietnam, but the moral ambiguity of it, the loss of national innocence, and the vague feeling of guilt among those who grew up in its wake, were not so different from the American experience now. Seen in this light, Ransom's "nostalgia . . . for the time before he had realized that good intentions don't make you innocent, for the time when he had less to regret" begins to make sense. Ransom's final encounter with destiny is rather like the obsession described by Christopher Isherwood as the Test—the idea that those who had not faced German machine-gun fire still had to pass a test of manhood.

The Auden-Isherwood generation shared with McInerney a fascination with big-city lowlife and escape abroad. Isherwood did not so much find himself in Berlin as reinvent himself; Isherwood became a fiction, a work of art. In a similar way he transformed other characters around him. Whatever they may have been like in real life, as literary characters they are fascinating. But I cannot say the same about McInerney's characters. He has a great talent for seizing on telling details (though some of them are somewhat odd: no geisha ever blackens her teeth—that was a custom among married women in premodern Japan). And his thumbnail sketches of minor characters such as a gangster boss, or Ransom's pompous employer at the A-OK Advertising Agency and English Language Conversation School, are quite excellent. But his main figures fail to come to life, trapped as they are in their movie plot. If only Clint Eastwood could be persuaded to play Ransom. . . .

IAN BURUMA

Ian Buruma is the author of *Behind the Mask: On the Sexual Demons, Sacred Mothers, Transvestites, Gangsters, Drifters & Other Japanese Cultural Heroes* (Pantheon).

CORRESPONDENCE, *from page 6*

er? According to official U.S. figures, the U.S. and these allies lead the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact by almost two to one in population, by more than three to one in gross national product, and by almost ten percent in annual defense spending. We trail only in military manpower, and there by a mere seven percent. And these figures entirely omit the People's Republic of China, something no Soviet strategist would ever do. With China included, the balance against the USSR becomes almost overwhelming.

STEPHEN M. WALT
Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs
Princeton University
Princeton, New Jersey

INTELLECTUALLY AFRAIDS

To the editors:

Your editorial "AFRAIDS" struck me as accurate and informative and the argument very persuasive. Last week, as an elected member of a local school board, I had to vote on whether to allow an eight-year-old hemophiliac with AIDS to attend as a regular student. After a number of public forums in which medical and health experts recited much of the information you reported, amid a great deal of statewide media coverage, after a number

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of meetings in which many thoughtful, articulate parents publicly stated their views, and after many hours of painful discussions and soul-searching among the board and our school administrators, we voted unanimously to exclude the child and provide him with a home and community educational/recreational program.

The discrepancy between my intellectual understanding as reflected in your excellent article and my feelings as a responsible elected official became embarrassingly apparent to me, but I feel absolutely sure that I made the right decision at this time. I learned last week that having to make a decision that directly affects people's lives is a helluva lot different from writing and thinking about it.

HILTON M. BIALEK
Member, Board of Education
Carmel Unified School District
Carmel, California

McCORMICK AND RAMSEY

To the editors:

I agree with nearly everything Charles Krauthammer wrote in "What to Do About 'Baby Doe' " (September 2). But only nearly. At one point Krauthammer states that the final (May 1985) regulations of the Department of Health and Human Services are "more Ramsey than McCormick." He continues: "Quality-of-life considerations are excluded. I would have preferred including them and defining them strictly."

I submit that this is exactly what we got. It is not accurate to say that treatment may be withheld "only if it will prolong dying or cause too much suffering." It may also be withheld when the infant is "chronically and irreversibly comatose." That is clearly a quality-of-life criterion—defined strictly. It is one Paul Ramsey's approach could not accommodate and is, if you will, "more McCormick than Ramsey."

RICHARD A. McCORMICK
Kennedy Institute of Ethics
Georgetown University
Washington, D.C.

The editors welcome correspondence from readers. Letters should include the writer's full name, address, and telephone number; be typed double-spaced; and be held to under 200 words. Letters may be edited for space. Please address letters to: Correspondence, TNR, 1220 19th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

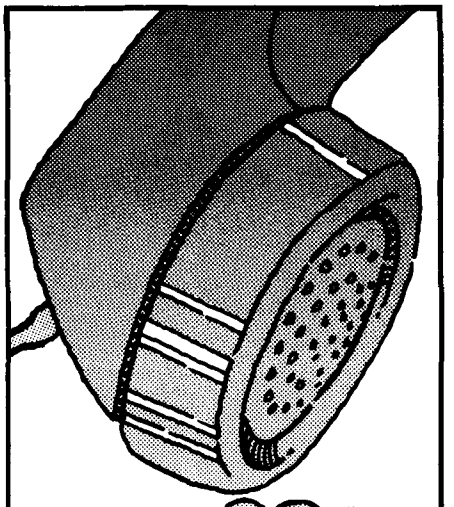
TRB, *from page 4*

cutting Social Security payments. Anyone who rules out both is bluffing. An 18-cent-per-gallon increase in the federal gasoline tax would raise a relatively painless $70 billion over five years, leaving the tax proportionally where it was before the energy crisis and leaving gas prices roughly where they were a few years ago. But no tax, however reasonable, will get past President Reagan. Nor is any general tax increase justified without a reform in Social Security.

There is not a shred of compassionate justification for every politician's refusal to take on Social Security. It's sheer cowardice. The typical current beneficiary of this program gets many times what he or she put into it, including compound interest, and is significantly better-off than the average working-age person who is paying into the system. The unfairness is not just distributional but also generational: today's workers will never enjoy the same bonanza when they retire. Reclaiming just a small part of the present windfall would go a long way toward restoring fiscal sanity and protecting the national prosperity on which all generations depend. There are any number of ways to reform Social Security without harming those who depend on it to keep them out of poverty. The easiest would be full taxation of all benefits.

It's true that the Social Security "trust fund" currently is generating a surplus, but this hardly answers the equity question, since the dollars come in from one group of people and go out to a different group. Gramm-Rudman-Hollings, in its crowning absurdity, embraces President Reagan's proposal that the "trust fund" conceit should be sanctified by taking Social Security out of the unified budget to make sure it never gets tampered with. That may be a crowd-pleaser, but it throws their whole diet out of whack, since the Social Security surplus is projected to contribute $50 billion to the budget in fiscal 1990. Without it, we will have to cut 20 to 25 percent from everything else in order to meet the timetable.

The only real hope in Gramm-Rudman-Hollings is that as each year's deadline approaches, our elected leaders will recoil in horror from its prescribed consequences and do something sensible instead. But then, if they had any inclination to do something sensible, they could do it now.



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WASHINGTON DIARIST

The Strenuous Life

ALEX HEARD'S TNR piece two weeks ago, "Porn in the USA," nicely captured the tizzy in the nation's capital about sex and violence in rock music. Observers of this crisis in Western society will be interested to learn how other countries are facing up to it. According to Wojciech Kubiak, a Polish disc jockey, American music videos have become all the rage on state-owned Polish TV. Kubiak told *Rock & Roll Confidential*, a pop music newsletter, that videos by Madonna, Cyndi Lauper, Stevie Wonder, Jerry Lee Lewis, Ratt, Lionel Richie, Michael Jackson, and Twisted Sister are especially popular. So far the leaders of the Communist PTA have not demanded a music rating system to protect Polish youth from Madonna's belly button and Twisted Sister's video mayhem. But if they do, there are many concerned parents in the United States to whom they can turn for advice. Mrs. Baker and Mrs. Gore, meet Mrs. Jaruzelski.

"OUTFITTERS" used to be little storefront operations in small towns in Wyoming and Vermont where you could buy a flannel shirt and a pair of hiking boots while wondering who would be crazy enough to buy the fiberglass kayak hanging from the rough-hewn walls. Now I belatedly notice that there are "outfitters" on every other corner in downtown Washington. The clothes and accoutrements of the "strenuous life" in the wilds have been modified into everyday fashion statements. In your fashionably functional yet ruggedly refined outfit, you are more spiritual than if you wear jacket and tie. You are quite beyond the amiable country hippie stage and quite above the average Joe in the street in his Calvin Kleins. You are as au courant as those flashy "Miami Vice" types elbowing their way to the bar—yet more casually hip. This is an American impulse that stretches back to the 1840s. Then the "strenuous life" was embraced by the declining patricians of New England hungering for a way to prove to themselves and the unruly democratic masses that they still deserved to lead the country. Francis Parkman, perhaps the first self-conscious pursuer of this ideal, plunged into the American wilderness for years on end. Teddy Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy adapted the ideal to boost their own careers and foreign wars with varying success. Today Ronald Reagan, although he wears the rustic clothes and retreats to the ranch every so often, issues no Kennedy-like calls for sacrifice and vigor. All you need now for the "strenuous life" is Eddie Bauer's uniform, the better to navigate the nightmarish rapids of urban bourgeois life.

I'VE HAD the strenuous life on my mind since reading George Fredrickson's fine book *The Inner Civil War: Northern Intellectuals and the Crisis of Union*. As Fredrickson explains it, the ordeal of the Civil War was welcomed by Parkman and other patrician advocates of the strenuous life. For them the war transformed the ideal of "seeking adventure outside the confines of civilization" to the ideal of doing "one's duty in a strenuous way within society." They justified the enormous loss of human life, not because it would free the slaves, but because it would teach democratic America a lesson. War would expose the folly of self-fulfillment, materialism, of disrespect for authority, especially for the well-to-do classes. Fredrickson quotes the response of conservative intellectual Orestes Brownson to the disaster of Shiloh. The nation must forget the "charming sentimentalities of well meaning philanthropists," Brownson insisted. "It is real blood, not red paint that flows, and real life-warm blood must still flow and flow in torrents. We must not have only the courage to be killed, but we must have . . . the harder courage to kill. . . ." The debut issue of *The National Interest*, a new right-wing magazine about U.S. foreign policy, suggests that this impulse too is still with us. Irving Kristol's leadoff article asserts "the importance of family, religion, property" in the new spirit of U.S. foreign policy. While preferring New Right-social science jargon to Brownson's candor, Kristol also hails the willingness to go to war: "The spirit of the new conservatism is enterprising, not at all risk-averse." Nicaragua is an obvious site for such risk-taking, and again there is little evidence that the goal of U.S. military action is to free repressed people. Rather, I suspect that if U.S. troops land in Managua, the echoes of Brownson will grow louder: that a conflict yielding a "torrent of blood" will be welcomed as a needed test of national character. Kristol eagerly awaits the day. That such a test "will arise is as certain as anything in this world can be, and the outlines of the [conservative] response are already visible." Exactly.

PART OF the strenuous life in Washington is drinking to excess with people whose political views you respectfully abhor. I did this last week at a fancy party marking the debut of *The National Interest*. The event made for an especially interesting episode of my favorite real-life soap opera, "All My Right-Wing Children." Many of the under-30 conservative intellectual operatives in Washington were on hand. I hope my right-wing friends won't take it as an insult if I say they are about as fashionable as you can get in Washington these days: smart, successful, harbingers of realignment and Reaganism. It is hard to contemplate bloodshed in such congenial company. With the assistance of a few Heinekens, it was much easier to contemplate smaller paradoxes—like wedding rings. Out of approximately 15 young right-wingers I clinked glasses with that night, exactly one was married. Now, to be fair to them, these people are mostly in their mid-to-late 20s. Statistically speaking, they do not lag too far behind in the race to the altar. But to be fair to the rest of us, they lag far behind the rhetoric of their movement. They work for people such as Kristol and the Reverend Sun Myung Moon who tirelessly promote "family values" and who cast aspersions on their opponents for shamefully lacking said "values." One shouldn't imagine that these young right-wingers are deferring the gratification of marital bliss while they do the cold, lonely work of funding the *contras* and Star Wars. The truth is that they show the same mixed feelings about marriage and "family values" that the public at large displays. They don't, for example, think much of the idea of having their rock music rated by the government-approved experts. "Family values," it seems, are like the "strenuous life": useful in justifying one's own access to power but not to be taken personally. Unfortunately, ideas have consequences.

J.M.

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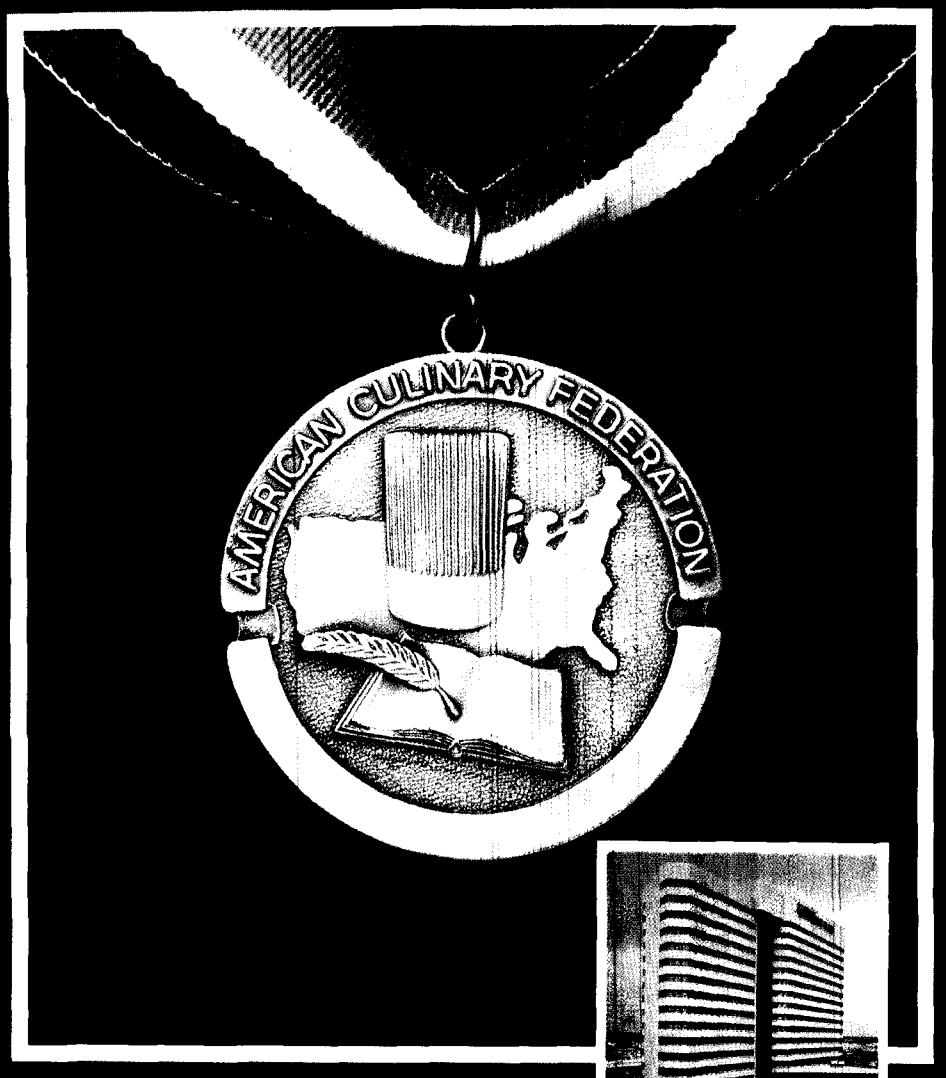

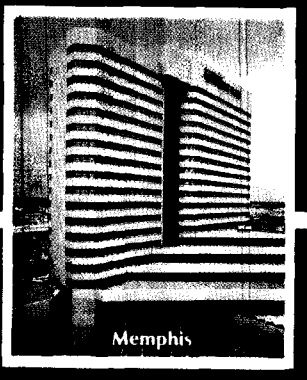

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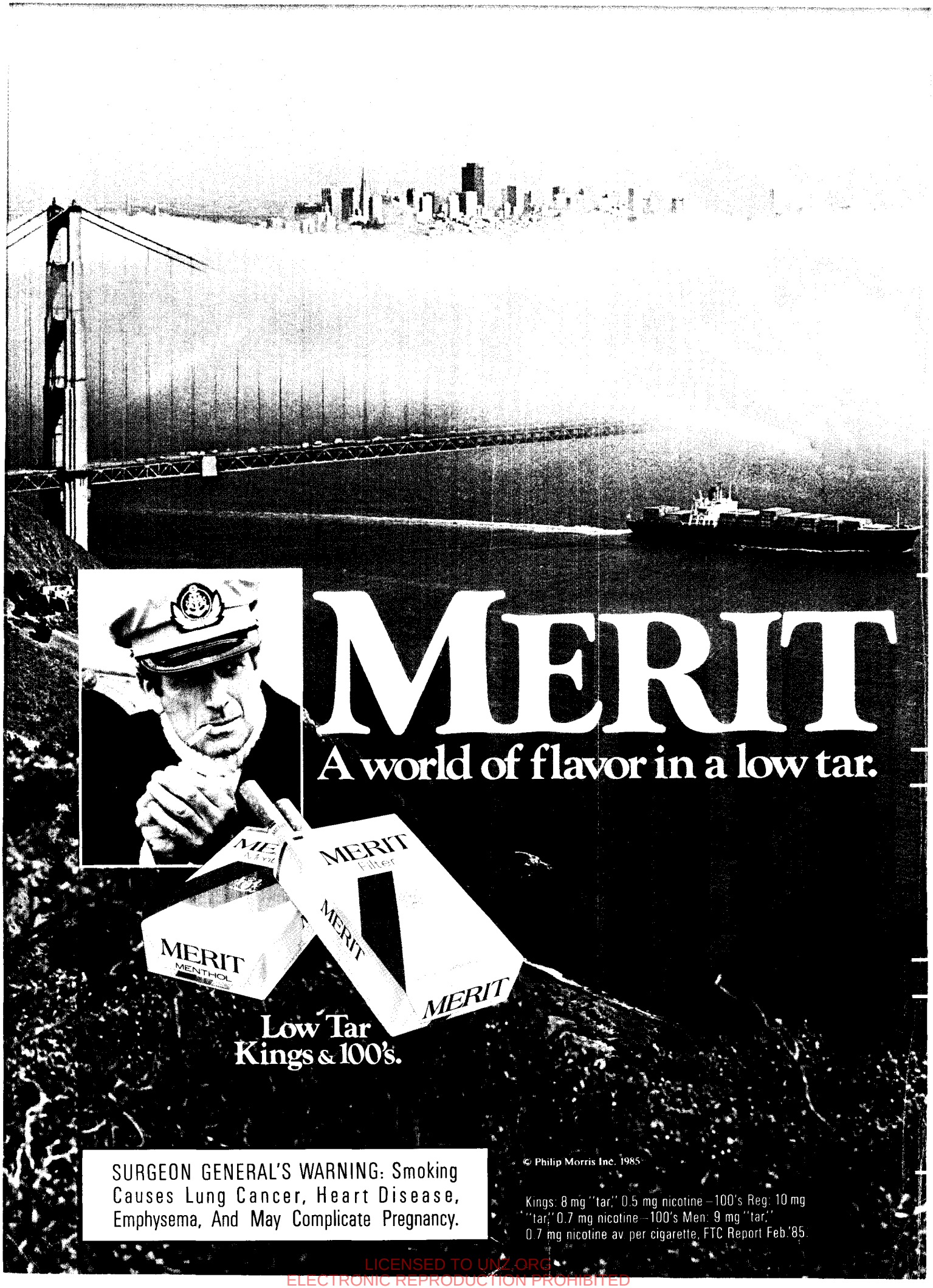

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